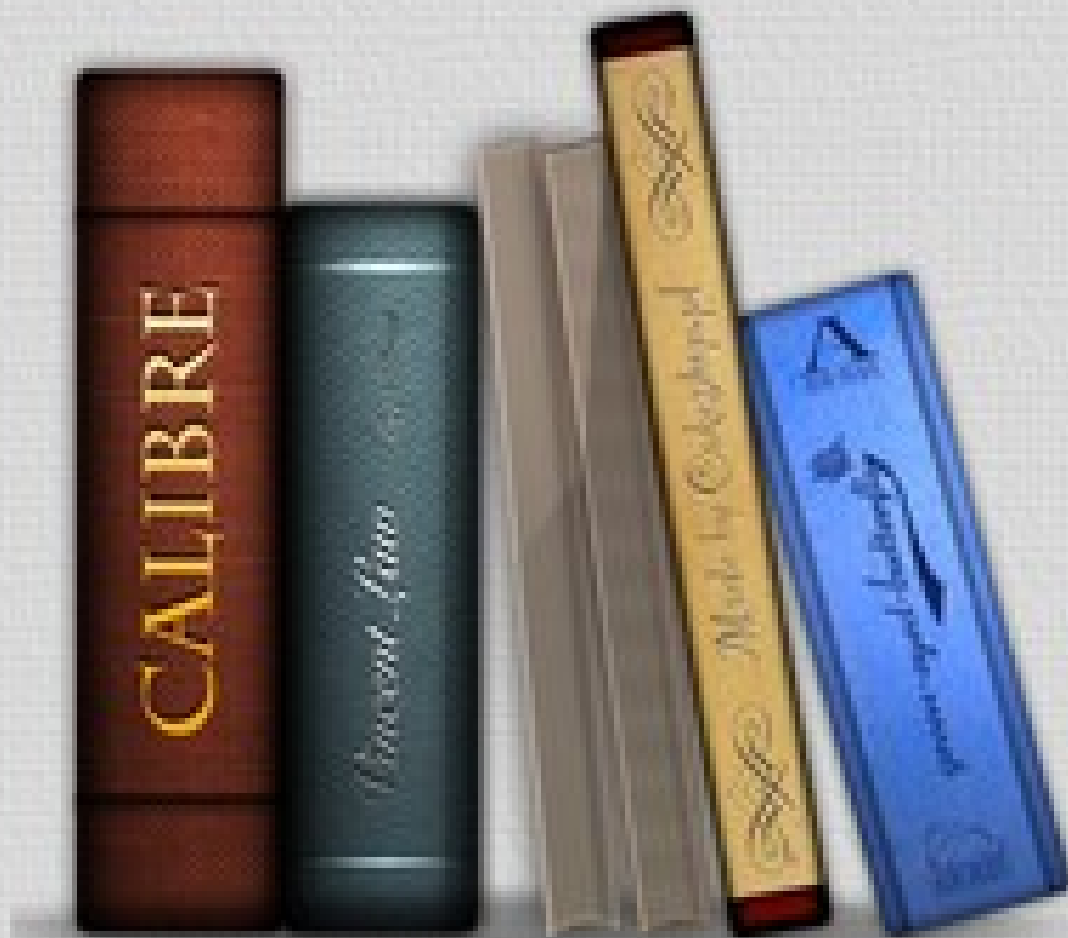


# DGuzik 58 Hebrews

David Guzik

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David Guzik



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(Heb 1:1)

## ***Introduction: God Has Spoken Fully and Finally in His Son***

After God spoke long ago<sup>1</sup> in various portions<sup>2</sup> and in various ways<sup>3</sup> to our ancestors<sup>4</sup> through the prophets, (Guzik)

### **Heb 1:1-14**

#### ***Hebrews 1 - A SUPERIOR SAVIOR***

A. Introduction to the book of Hebrews.

1. This is an essay or a sermon or a letter to the Hebrews - and everyone.

a. The structure of Hebrews is a different from other New Testament books; it begins like an essay, continues as a sermon and ends like a letter.

b. Obviously, the writer was trying to reach Jewish Christians; but it is also written to a Greek frame of mind with its analysis of Jesus as the ultimate reality. That approach to the nature of Jesus spoke to the thinking found in Greek philosophy.

2. Who wrote Hebrews? The human author is unknown, but the inspiration of the Holy Spirit is evident.

a. The earliest statement on the authorship of Hebrews comes from Clement of Alexandria, who said that Paul wrote it in Hebrew and Luke translated into Greek (Eusebius, *History* 6.14.2). But many commentators agree that it is unlikely that Paul wrote this book.

i. Dods quotes Farrar: "The writer cites differently from St. Paul; he writes differently; he argues differently; he

declaims differently; he constructs and connects his sentences differently; he builds up his paragraphs on a wholly

different model . . . His style is the style of a man who thinks as well as writes in Greek; whereas St. Paul wrote in Greek but thought in Syriac.”

ii. Bruce quotes Calvin: “The manner of teaching and the style sufficiently show that Paul was not the author, and the writer himself confesses in the second chapter (Heb\_2:3) that he was one of the disciples of the apostles, which is wholly different from the way in which Paul spoke of himself.”

b. The early commentator Tertullian (who wrote in the early 200s) said Barnabas wrote Hebrews, but no support is offered other than that Barnabas was a Levite (Act\_4:36) and an man of encouragement (Act\_4:36).

c. Martin Luther believed that Apollos wrote the book of Hebrews, because Acts said that Apollos was eloquent and had a strong command of the Old Testament (Act\_18:24).

d. Adolf Harnack thought Priscilla (with her husband Aquilla) wrote Hebrews, and it remained anonymous so it would hide its controversial female authorship. But when the writer to the Hebrews speaks of himself in Heb\_11:32, the masculine grammar of the passage argues against the idea that a woman wrote the letter.

3. When was Hebrews written? Probably somewhere around 67 to 69 AD.

a. The reference to Timothy (Heb\_13:23) places it fairly early.

b. The present lack of physical persecution (Heb\_12:4) puts it fairly early.

c. The lack of any reference to the destruction of the temple probably puts it before 70 AD, when Jerusalem and the second temple were destroyed. Since the writer to the Hebrews is so concerned with the passing of the Old Covenant, it seems unlikely that he would have ignored the

destruction of the temple if it had happened before he wrote.

4. Hebrews is a book deeply rooted in the Old Testament.

a. Hebrews has 29 quotations and 53 allusions to the Old Testament, for a total of 82 references. Significantly, Hebrews does not refer even once to the books of the Apocrypha.

5. Hebrews is basically a book that exhorts discouraged Christians to continue on strong with Jesus in light of the complete superiority of who He is and what He has done for us.

B. The superior Savior.

1. (Heb\_1:1-2 a) Jesus brings a revelation superior to that of the prophets of old.

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by *His* Son, a. **God**: This is how the book begins. There is no attempt to prove God's existence; it is simply a self-evident given.

Hebrews begins with an idea basic to the Bible: God exists, and He speaks to man; or as the title of a Francis Schaeffer book put it: *He Is There And He Is Not Silent*.

b. **Who at various times and in different ways spoke:**

The revelation given through the prophets was brought in **various** ways - sometimes through parables, historical narrative, prophetic confrontation, dramatic presentation, psalms, proverbs, and the like.

i. The idea is that the prophets spoke to the fathers in various ways; not that God spoke to the prophets in various ways (though that is true also).

ii. God spoke to Moses by a burning bush (Exodus 2), to Elijah by a still, small voice (1 Kings 19), to Isaiah by a heavenly vision (Isaiah 6), to Hosea by his family crisis (Hos\_1:2) and to Amos by a basket of fruit (Amo\_8:1).

iii. God spoke in a spectrum in the Old Testament; Jesus is a prism that which collects all those bands of light and

focuses them into one pure beam.

c. **These last days** refers to the age of Messiah. It may be a long period, but it is the last period.

d. **Spoken to us by His Son:** It isn't so much that Jesus *brought* a message from the Father; He *is* a message from the Father.

i. The revelation from Jesus Himself was unique, because not only was it purely God's message (as was the case with every other inspired writer) but it was also God's *personality* through which the message came.

ii. "If men cannot learn about God from the Son, no amount of prophetic voices or actions would convince them."

(Guthrie)

e. The Son does not speak in Hebrews; the Father speaks concerning the Son. The book of Hebrews is the Father telling us what the Son is all about.

2. (Heb\_1:2-3) A sevenfold description of the glorious Son.

Whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; who being the brightness of *His* glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

a. He is **heir of all things** - befitting His status as firstborn over all creation (Col\_1:15).

b. He **made the worlds** (the very ages).

c. He is the **brightness of His** (the Father's) **glory**. **Brightness** is *apaugasma*, which "denotes the radiance shining forth from the source of light"; Philo also used the term of the Logos.

i. Jesus is the "beam" of God's glory; we have never seen the sun, only the rays of its light as they come to us. Even so, we have never seen the Father, but we have seen Him through the "rays" of the Son.

d. He is the **express image of His person**: The idea is of an exact likeness as made by a stamp.

e. He is the One **upholding all things by the word of His power**, but **upholding** is better thought of as “maintaining.” The word does not have the idea of passively holding something up (like the mythical Atlas held the earth), but of actively sustaining.

i. In His earthly ministry, Jesus constantly demonstrated the power of His word. He could heal, forgive, cast out demons, calm nature’s fury all at the expression of one word.

f. He **Himself purged our sins**: Here, the important idea of an external purification for sins is introduced. This is far apart from the idea that we can purify ourselves (as the Pharisees thought).

g. He **sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high**: His position alone is enough to set Him above all angels.

3. (Heb\_1:4) Therefore, Jesus is **so much better than the angels**.

Having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

a. **Having become so much better than the angels**: In what sense did Jesus **become** better than the angels? Isn’t He eternally better than the angels?

i. Jesus certainly is eternally better than the angels. But He **became** better in the sense that He was made *perfect* (complete as our redeemer) *through sufferings* (Heb\_2:10) - something no angel has ever done.

b. **A more excellent name than they**: Jesus’ superior status is demonstrated by a superior **name** (which isn’t merely a title, but a description of nature and character).

4. The rest of Hebrews 1 will prove from the Scriptures that Jesus is better than the angels, but why is it important to understand that Jesus is better?

a. Because we often best understand things when they are set in contrast to other things.

b. Because the Old Covenant came by the hands of angels to Moses, but a better covenant came by a better being,

Jesus. It might have been easy for first century Jews to dismiss the gospel thinking it came at the hands of mere men - the apostles.

But here we see the Divine (superior to angelic) coming of the gospel.

c. Because there was a dangerous tendency to worship angels developing in the early Church (Col\_2:18, Gal\_1:8), and

Hebrews shows that Jesus is high above any angel.

d. Because there was the heretical idea that Jesus Himself was an angel, a concept which degrades His glory and majesty.

e. Because understanding how Jesus is better than the angels helps us to understand how He is better than any of the

“competitors” to Him in our lives.

i. In this sense, the purpose of Hebrews is like the purpose of the Transfiguration. Each of them cry out and say, *This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!* (Mar\_9:7)

C. The Scriptures prove Jesus is superior to the angels.

1. (Heb\_1:5) Jesus is superior to the angels because He is the Son of God, as shown in Psa\_2:7 and 2Sa\_7:14.

For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son”?

a. The *more excellent name* of Heb\_1:4 is the name **Son**; though the angels may *collectively* be called “sons of God” (Job\_1:6), but no angel is ever given that title *individually*.

b. **Today I have begotten You: Begotten** speaks of the equality of *substance* and *essential nature* between the Father and Son; it means that the Father and the Son share the same *being*.

c. We must avoid the tendency to promote Jesus’ deity at the expense of His humanity. The incarnation means that He is *fully* God and *fully* man; no single book stresses *both* themes more than the book of Hebrews.

2. (Heb\_1:6-7) Jesus is superior to the angels because angels worship and serve Jesus, who is their God, as shown in Deu\_32:43

(in the Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scrolls) and Psa\_104:4. But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits and His ministers a flame of fire."

a. **Firstborn** was as much a concept as it was a designation for the one born first; since the firstborn son was "first in line"

and received the position of favor and honor, the title "firstborn" could be given to indicate that someone was of the highest position and honor.

i. Many of those *not* born first in the Bible are given the title "firstborn." David is an example of this (Psa\_89:27) and so is Ephraim (Jer\_31:9).

ii. According to Rabbi Bechai, quoted in Lightfoot, the ancient Rabbis called Yahweh Himself "Firstborn of the World." It was a title, not a description of origin.

iii. Rabbis used **firstborn** as specifically a Messianic title. One ancient Rabbi wrote, "God said, As I made Jacob a first-born (Exo\_4:22), so also will I make king Messiah a first-born (Psa\_89:28)."

b. **Let all the angels of God worship Him:** Jesus is superior because He is the *object* of angelic worship, not an angelic worshipper. They worship Him; He does not worship among them.

i. Revelation 5 gives a glimpse of the angelic worship of Jesus.

c. Furthermore, Jesus is Lord of the angels. They are **His angels** and **His ministers**. The angels belong to Jesus, and He is not among them.

3. (8-12) Jesus is superior to the angels because the Father Himself calls Him (and not any angel) God and Lord



(Yahweh), as shown in Psa\_45:6-7 and Psa\_102:25-27 from the Septuagint.

But to the Son *He says*: “Your throne, O God, *is* forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness *is* the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.” And: “You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will not fail.”

a. **Your throne, O God**: The mere address is enough; the Father calls the Son **God**.

i. Some argue that there are many beings called “gods” in the Bible, like Satan (2Co\_4:4), and earthly judges (Psa\_82:1 and Psa\_82:6). So they say, “So what if Jesus is called a ‘god’?”

ii. But these others are *supposed* gods, *pretenders* to their throne. If Jesus is not the *true* God, He is a *false* god, like Satan and the wicked judges of Psalms 82.

iii. But Jesus *is* the True and Living God, called so here by God the Father; and also by John in Joh\_1:1, by Thomas in Joh\_20:28, and by Paul in Tit\_2:13; Tit\_3:4.

b. **Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You**: This passage shows striking interaction between the Persons of the Trinity. **God, Your God** speaks of the Father, and His position of authority over the Second Person of the Trinity; *You* speaks of the Son; *anointed* has in mind the ministry and presence of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Trinity.

c. The Son is not only called **God**, but *Lord* (Yahweh) as well (Heb\_1:10), and the Son is described with attributes that God alone has.

i. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity, is the Creator (**You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of**

**the earth).**

ii. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity is self-existent (**They will perish, but You will remain**).

iii. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity is sovereign (**Like a cloak You will fold them up, and they will be changed**).

iv. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the Trinity is immutable, unchanging (**You are the same**), and eternal (**Your years will not fail**).

4. (Heb\_1:13-14) Jesus is superior to the angels because He has sat down, having completed His work, while the angels work on continually, as shown in Psa\_110:1.

But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

a. **Sit at My right hand:** Anyone who sits in the divine presence shows that they have the perfect right to be there; there are no seats for the angels around the throne of God, because they are constantly busy praising God and serving Him.

b. It isn't good to be too comfortable in the presence of majesty. There is a story about a man named Lear who was hired to give Queen Victoria art lessons. Things were going well, and Lear started to feel quite at home in the palace. He enjoyed standing in front of the fire, leaning on the hearth and warming himself in a relaxed manner, but every time he did, one of the Queen's attendants would invite him to look at something on the other side of the room, making him move. No one

explained it to him, but after a while, he got the idea: good manners said it was wrong for a subject to have such a relaxed attitude in the presence of their Queen.

c. **But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand.”** In the same way, the angels don't “relax”

before God. They “stand” before the Father, but the Son sits down - because He isn’t a subject, He is the Sovereign.

i. The angels are **ministering spirits**, not *governing* spirits; *service*, not *dominion* is their calling.

ii. Angels, in that respect, are like a toy that won’t quit; they have to keep working, while the Son can take a posture of rest, because He is the Son.

iii. Jesus is also called a servant and a minister, but this is part of His voluntary humiliation, not his essential nature -- as is the case with the angels.

d. An interesting concept: angels work for *us* (**those who will inherit salvation**).

(Heb 1:2) in these last days he has spoken to us in a son,<sup>5</sup> whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he created the world.<sup>6</sup>

(Heb 1:3) The Son is<sup>7</sup> the radiance of his glory and the representation of his essence, and he sustains all things by his powerful word,<sup>8</sup>

and so when he had accomplished cleansing for sins, *he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.*<sup>9</sup>

(Heb 1:4) Thus he became<sup>10</sup> so far better than the angels as<sup>11</sup> he has inherited a name superior to theirs.

(Heb 1:5) ***The Son Is Superior to Angels***

For to which of the angels did God<sup>12</sup> ever say, " ***You are my son! Today I have fathered you***"?<sup>13</sup> And in another place<sup>14</sup> he says,<sup>15</sup> " ***I will be his father and he will be my son.***"<sup>16</sup>

(Heb 1:6) But when he again brings<sup>17</sup> his firstborn into the world, he says, " ***Let all the angels of God worship him!***"<sup>18</sup>

(Heb 1:7) And he says<sup>19</sup> of the angels, " ***He makes 20 his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire,***"<sup>21</sup>

(Heb 1:8) but of<sup>22</sup> the Son he says,<sup>23</sup>

" ***Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,*** <sup>24</sup>

***and a righteous scepter 25 is the scepter of your kingdom.***

(Heb 1:9) ***You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness.***

***So God, your God, has anointed you over your companions 26 with the oil of rejoicing. "27***

(Heb 1:10) And,

***" You founded the earth in the beginning, Lord, 28 and the heavens are the works of your hands.***

(Heb 1:11) ***They will perish, but you continue.***

***And they will all grow old like a garment,***

(Heb 1:12) ***and like a robe you will fold them up:***

***and like a garment29 they will be changed, but you are the same and your years will never run out. "30***

(Heb 1:13) But to which of the angels31 has he ever said, "***Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet***"?32

(Heb 1:14) Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to serve those33 who will inherit salvation?

(Heb 2:1) ***Warning Against Drifting Away***

Therefore we must pay closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.

(Guzik)

## **Heb 2:1-18**

### ***Hebrews 2 - JESUS, OUR ELDER BROTHER***

A. Therefore: Because of the superiority of Jesus to the angels, we must give heed to Jesus.

1. (Heb 2:1) The lesson of Hebrews 1 is applied: listen and don't drift away.

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

a. The use of **therefore** in Hebrews is instructive; it makes us pay attention to a point of application after the writer has developed a principle. The Scriptural *fact* of Jesus' superiority over the angels has life-changing application - and now we must consider the application.

b. What we must do: give **more earnest heed** to the words of Jesus. It's easy to think this exhortation to **give the more earnest heed** is directed to unbelievers; but it is something "mature" Christians must be challenged with also. We can become desensitized to the glory of Jesus' message, thinking we know it all.

i. **Give the more earnest heed** has not only the idea of *hearing* carefully, but also in *doing* what we have heard - and we **must give the more earnest heed**.

c. If we do not **give the more earnest heed**, we will **drift away**. Drifting is something that happens quite automatically when we are not anchored to anything solid; if we are not "anchored" in the superiority of Jesus, we will drift with the currents of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

i. One doesn't have to *do* anything to simply **drift away**; most Christian regress comes from a slow drifting, not from a sudden departure.

ii. An ungodly farmer died, and they discovered in his will that he had left his farm to the Devil. In the court, they didn't quite know what to do with it -- how do you give a farm to the Devil? Finally, the judge decided: "The best way to carry out the wishes of the deceased is to allow the farm to grow weeds, the soil to erode, and the house and barn to rot. In our opinion, the best way to leave something to the Devil is to do nothing." We can leave our lives to the Devil the same way - doing nothing, drifting with whatever currents will drive us.

2. (Heb\_2:2-4) The lesson emphasized: how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just

reward, how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard *Him*, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

a. **The word spoken through angels** is a way of describing the Mosaic Law, which was *received . . . by the direction of angels* (Act\_7:53). The idea is that the law was “delivered” to Moses by the hands of angels.

i. The concept that angels mediated the Law is found in Deu\_33:2, Act\_7:53, Gal\_3:19 and Josephus, *Antiquities*, 15.53.

b. The Mosaic Law was **steadfast** and strict (**every transgression and disobedience received a just reward**). It demanded to be taken seriously.

c. **How shall we escape**: If we must take the word which came by angels seriously, how much more seriously must we take the word which came by the Son of God - who has been proven to be greater than the angels?

i. A greater word, brought by a greater Person, having greater promises, will bring a greater condemnation if neglected.

d. Therefore, we must not **neglect so great a salvation**. The word **neglect** is *amelesantes*, which is used in Mat\_22:5 ( *they made light of it*) of those who disregarded the invitation to the marriage supper. It means to have the opportunity, but to ignore or disregard it.

i. This is a word to *believers*, not to the unsaved. The danger described isn't *rejecting* salvation (though the principle certainly applies), but *neglecting* salvation.

ii. Remember that Hebrews was written not primarily as an evangelistic tract, but as an encouragement and warning to discouraged Christians, those who neglected an abiding walk with Jesus.

e. **Spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders:** This word was spoken by Jesus, then confirmed by eyewitnesses (**those who heard Him**).

Then it was **confirmed** with **signs, wonders, miracles** and **gifts of the Holy Spirit** given by God.

i. In saying **and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him**, the writer confirms he is not a “first generation” Christian. He has heard the message second-hand through the apostles and eye-witnesses of Jesus’ ministry.

ii. Heb\_2:3 is one reason many believe Paul did not write Hebrews. In other passages, Paul seems to put himself on an equal level with the apostles and other eyewitnesses of Jesus (1Co\_9:1; 1Co\_15:3-11).

f. God does confirm His word with **various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit** - but doing it all **according to His own will**.

i. Jesus said miraculous signs would follow those who believe (Mar\_16:17); if there is no element of the miraculous, one may question whether there is true belief in Jesus or if the word of God is truly being preached. After all, is the preacher giving anything for God to confirm?

ii. On the other hand, the Spirit brings such miracles and gifts **according to His will**. Miracles can’t be “worked up” and hyped; much damage has been done by those who don’t think *enough* miracles are happening, and want to “prime the pump” through the enthusiasm of the flesh.

iii. It’s hard to say which is worse - the denial of miracles and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, or the fleshly counterfeit of them. But the devil doesn’t care which side of the boat he throws you over, just as long as you get soaking wet!

B. The glorious humanity of Jesus Christ

1. (Heb\_2:5-8 a) We know Jesus is human, because God has put the world in subjection to man, not angels (evidence: Psa\_8:4-6).

For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels. But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the son of man that You take care of him? You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, and set him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing *that is* not put under him.

**a. You have made him a little lower than the angels:**

In chapter one, the writer to the Hebrews demonstrated the deity of Jesus and His superiority over all angels brilliantly from the Scriptures. Now he will demonstrate the *humanity* of Jesus from the Scriptures, and apply the implications of Jesus' humanity.

i. It is Scripturally wrong to think of Jesus as merely God or merely man. It is wrong to think of Him as 50% God, 50% man (or any other percentage split). It is wrong to think of Him as "man on the outside" and "God on the inside." The Bible teaches Jesus is *fully* God and *fully* man, that a human nature was added to His divine nature, and both natures existed in one Person, Jesus Christ.

ii. Significantly, the first false teaching about Jesus arising in the church was not that He wasn't God, but that He wasn't really human and He only *seemed* to be human. The heresy was called *Docetism*, coming from the Greek word *to seem*, and was taught by Cerinthus, who opposed the apostle John in the city of Ephesus, and whose teaching is probably the focus of 1Jn\_4:2; 1Jn\_5:6.

**b. He has not put the world to come . . . in subjection to angels:** God never gave angels the kind of dominion man originally had over the earth (Gen\_1:26-30); angels do not have dominion over this world, or the world to come.

**c. What is man:** The quotation from Psa\_8:4-6 shows both the smallness of man in relation to the God of creation, and



the dominion that God has given man, even though he is **a little lower than the angels**.

d. **He left nothing that is not put under him**: The writer emphasizes the point: God has put *all* things (not *some* things) under subjection to human beings.

i. So, how can Jesus rule and reign over the world to come if He is not human? Then God's promise to put the world under subjection to man would be untrue.

2. (Heb\_2:8-9) A problem and its solution.

But now we do not yet see all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

a. **But now we do not yet see all things put under him**: How can we say that all things are subject to man? It seems to be an unfulfilled promise.

b. **But we see Jesus**: The promise is fulfilled in Jesus, who is Lord over all, and through whom man can regain the dominion originally intended for Adam (Rev\_1:6; Rev\_5:10; Mat\_25:21).

i. How many things we do not understand are put into proper focus if we will only **see Jesus**! The answers to life's most perplexing questions are not questions of "Why?" though we often torture ourselves asking "Why?" The greatest answer is a *Who* - Jesus Christ!

c. This promise of dominion could only be fulfilled through the humility (**a little lower than the angels**) and suffering (**the suffering of death**) of Jesus, who defeated the evil Adam had introduced into the world - which was death (Rom\_5:12).

i. God gave man dominion over the earth, but man forfeited his power (not his right or authority) to take that dominion through sin, and the principle of death took away the power to rule. But Jesus came, and through His humility and suffering, defeated the power of death, and makes possible the fulfillment of God's promise that

humans will have dominion over the earth - fulfilled both through Jesus' own dominion, and the rule of believers with Him. (Rev\_20:4)

3. (Heb\_2:10-13) We know Jesus is human, because He calls is **brethren**.

For it was fitting for Him, for whom *are* all things and by whom *are* all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified *are* all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying: "I will declare Your name to My brethren; In the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You." And again: "I will put My trust in Him." And again: "Here am I and the children whom God has given Me."

a. Not only was it necessary - it was **fitting** for the sovereign God - **for whom are all things and by whom are all things** to be made **perfect through sufferings** in the task of **bringing many sons to glory**.

i. Conceivably, God could have engineered a way to save us that did not require the suffering of the Son of God; but it was fitting for Jesus to save us at the cost of His own agony.

ii. This is the ultimate illustration of the fact that real love, real giving, involves *sacrifice*. As David said, *nor will I offer . . . offerings to the LORD my God which costs me nothing* (2Sa\_24:24). God's love for us had to show itself in sacrifice, and what could God sacrifice unless He added humanity to His deity and suffered on our behalf?

b. Jesus was made **perfect through sufferings**. It isn't that there was anything *lacking* in His Deity, but only in His experience: how does God in heaven know *suffering* by experience?

i. "*To make perfect* does not imply moral imperfection in Jesus, but only the consummation of that human experience of sorrow and pain through which he must pass in order to become the leader of his people's salvation."

(Vincent)

ii. The point is that it was **fitting** for the Father to do this, in the sense that *it pleased the LORD to bruise Him* (Isa\_53:10) for the sake of **bringing many sons to glory**.

c. Therefore, we are **sanctified** by One who has been sanctified. We are all of the same human family, so Jesus **is not ashamed to call them** (that is, us) **brethren**. He could not be our brother unless He was also human like us.

i. Jesus **is not ashamed to call** us **brethren**. But are we ashamed to openly say that we belong to Jesus? Who should be more embarrassed?

d. The writer cites three evidences to the fact that Jesus the Messiah calls His people His brethren from the Old Testament: Psa\_22:22, Isa\_8:17-18.

i. In each one of these examples, we see Messiah willing to associate Himself with His brethren, whether it be in a congregation of worship, a community of trust in the Father, or declaring a common family association.

4. (Heb\_2:14-16) What Jesus did as our Brother.

Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For indeed He does not give aid to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham.

a. **He Himself likewise shared in the same:** For Jesus to truly fulfill the role of “Elder Brother” for the family of the redeemed, He *had to* take on **flesh and blood**. He had to enter into the prison to free the captives.

b. **Through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil:** Some take this as meaning that Jesus destroyed Satan’s “right” to rule over man, which was presumably given to him in the garden of Eden through Adam’s rebellion. The idea is that Jesus took away Satan’s “right” to rule by allowing Satan to

“unlawfully” take Jesus’ life on the cross, and Satan’s “unlawful” action against Jesus forfeited his right to rule over man. In this thinking, the end result is that the devil has no right over those who come to God through Jesus’ work on the cross.

i. Since death only has dominion over those who are born sinners or who have sinned (Rom\_5:12), Satan had no “right” to take the life of Jesus, who had never sinned nor was born a sinner - and the devil then committed an “unlawful” murder, according to his nature (Joh\_8:44). Jesus allowed the devil to *bruise His heel* so that He could *bruise his head* (Gen\_3:15).

ii. The problem with this approach is that we know the devil did not *take* Jesus’ life; He laid it down of His own accord, and no one took it from Him (Joh\_10:17-18).

iii. However, one might say the devil is guilty of “*attempted* unlawful murder” over someone he had no rights over, because there was no stain of sin on Jesus. Satan certainly *wanted* to murder Jesus, and tried to, and is guilty of that.

c. **Release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage:** The fear of death rules as a tyrant over humanity. Some try to make peace with death by calling it their friend. But Christians have no fear of death (though perhaps a fear of *dying*), not because death is their friend, but because it is a defeated enemy who now serves God’s purpose in the believer’s life.

d. **He does give aid to the seed of Abraham:** The Father’s work in Jesus was not primarily for the sake of angels (though it is for the angels in a secondary sense according to Eph\_3:10), it is for the people of faith (**the seed of Abraham**).

i. **Seed of Abraham** here is used in the sense of those who are Abraham’s children inwardly, not ethnically (Rom\_2:28-29, Gal\_3:7).

4. (Heb\_2:17-18) Therefore: Jesus is our faithful High Priest.

Therefore, in all things He had to be made like *His* brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things *pertaining* to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.

a. **Made like His brethren:** If Jesus were not **like** us, He could not be our High Priest, representing us before the Father and making atonement (**propitiation**) for our sins.

i. Neither the Deity nor the Humanity of Jesus are negotiable. If we diminish either and He is unable to save us.

b. **That He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest:** The High Priest wore a breastplate that had stones, engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, on both his chest and his shoulders. The High Priest would therefore be in constant sympathy with the people of God, carrying them on his heart and in his work (on the shoulders).

i. Jesus did not wear the High Priest's breastplate; but the wound in His chest and the cross on His shoulders are even more eloquent testimony to His heart for us and work on our behalf - **to make propitiation for the sins of the people.**

c. Because Jesus added humanity to His deity, and has experienced human suffering, Jesus **is able to aid those who are being tempted**, and when we are suffering. He really does know what you are going through!

d. It is astonishing: there is a God in Heaven who by *experience* knows what I am going through, and can **aid** me, not just feel bad for me!

i. "This is the most powerful preservative against despair, and the firmest ground of hope and comfort, that ever believing, penitent sinners could desire or have." (Poole)  
"Were the rest of the Scripture silent on this subject, this verse might be an ample support for every tempted soul." (Clarke)

(Heb 2:2) For if the message spoken through angels<sup>1</sup> proved to be so firm that every violation<sup>2</sup> or disobedience received

its just penalty, (Heb 2:3) how will we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was first communicated through the Lord and was confirmed to us by those who heard him, (Heb 2:4) while God confirmed their witness<sup>3</sup> with signs and wonders and various miracles and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed<sup>4</sup>

according to his will.

(Heb 2:5) ***Exposition of Psalm 8: Jesus and the Destiny of Humanity***

For he did not put the world to come,<sup>5</sup> about which we are speaking,<sup>6</sup> under the control of angels.

(Heb 2:6) Instead someone testified somewhere:

" ***What is man that you think of him 7 or the son of man that you care for him?***

(Heb 2:7) ***You made him lower than the angels for a little while.***

***You crowned him with glory and honor 8***

(Heb 2:8) ***You put all things under his control. "***<sup>9</sup>

For when he ***put all things under his control***, he left nothing outside of his control. At present we do not yet see ***all things***

***under his control***,<sup>10</sup>

(Heb 2:9) but we see Jesus, who was made ***lower than the angels for a little while***,<sup>11</sup> now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death,<sup>12</sup> so that by God's grace he would experience<sup>13</sup> death on behalf of everyone.

(Heb 2:10) For it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist,<sup>14</sup> in bringing many sons to glory, to make the pioneer<sup>15</sup> of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

(Heb 2:11) For indeed he who makes holy and those being made holy all have the same origin,<sup>16</sup> and so<sup>17</sup> he is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters,<sup>18</sup>

(Heb 2:12) saying, " ***I will proclaim your name to my brothers; 19 in the midst of the assembly I will praise you.***"<sup>20</sup>

(Heb 2:13) Again he says,<sup>21</sup> "I will be confident in him," and again, " ***Here I am, 22 with 23 the children God has given me.***"<sup>24</sup>

(Heb 2:14) Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in<sup>25</sup> their humanity,<sup>26</sup> so that through death he could destroy<sup>27</sup> the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), (Heb 2:15) and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death.

(Heb 2:16) For surely his concern is not for angels, but he is concerned for Abraham's descendants.

(Heb 2:17) Therefore he had<sup>28</sup> to be made like his brothers and sisters<sup>29</sup> in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement<sup>30</sup> for the sins of the people.

(Heb 2:18) For since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

(Heb 3:1) ***Jesus and Moses***

Therefore, holy brothers and sisters,<sup>1</sup> partners in a heavenly calling, take note of Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess,<sup>2</sup>

(Guzik)

### **Heb 3:1-19**

#### ***Hebrews 3 - JESUS, SUPERIOR TO MOSES***

A. Considering Jesus.

1. (Heb\_3:1 a) Therefore: who we *are* in light of the previous paragraphs.

Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling,

a. **Therefore:** We have been left with the picture of Jesus, our heavenly High Priest. Since this is true, it teaches something about who we are. Understanding who *we are* in light of who Jesus is and what He has done is essential for a healthy Christian life. It keeps us from the depths of discouragement the Hebrew Christians faced.

b. We are **holy brethren**: Because our heavenly, holy High Priest is *not ashamed to call them brethren*. (Heb\_2:11) It should bless and encourage us that Jesus calls us His **holy brethren**.

c. We are **partakers of the heavenly calling**: Because Jesus is committed to *bringing many sons to glory* (Heb\_2:10), we are partners in His heavenly calling. This should bless and encourage us to press on, even through difficult times and trials.

2. (Heb\_3:1 b) Therefore: what we are to *do* in light of the previous paragraphs.

Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus,

a. **Consider the Apostle**: We don't often apply this word to Jesus, but He is our **Apostle**. The Greek word for **apostle** really means something like *ambassador*. In this sense, Jesus is the Father's ultimate ambassador (Heb\_1:1-2). God had to send a message of love so important, He sent it through **Christ Jesus**.

i. The message is plain: **consider** this. **Consider** that God loves you so much He sent the ultimate Messenger, **Christ Jesus**. **Consider** also how important it is for you to pay attention to God's ultimate **Apostle, Christ Jesus**.

ii. God also chose His original, authoritative "ambassadors" for the church; these are what we think of as the original twelve apostles. God still chooses ambassadors in a less authoritative sense, and there is a sense in which we are *all* ambassadors for God.

b. **Consider the . . . High Priest**: Jesus is the One who supremely represents us before the Father, and who



represents the Father to us. God cares for us so much that He put the ultimate mediator, the ultimate **High Priest**, between Himself and sinful man.

i. The message is plain: **consider** this. **Consider** that God loves you this much, and that if such a great **High Priest** has been given to us, we must honor and submit to this **High Priest**, who is **Christ Jesus**.

c. **Consider the Jesus as the Apostle and High Priest of our confession:** Jesus is the *ambassador* and the *mediator* of **our confession**. Christianity is a **confession** made with both the mouth (Mat\_10:32, Rom\_10:9) and with the life.

3. (Heb\_3:2) Consider Jesus as **faithful** in His duties before the Father, even as Moses was a faithful servant of God.

Who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also *was faithful* in all His house.

a. **Who was faithful:** When we *consider* the past faithfulness of Jesus, it makes us understand that He will *continue* to be **faithful**. And as He was **faithful** to God the Father (**Him who appointed Him**), so He will be **faithful** to us. This should bless and encourage us!

b. **As Moses also was faithful in all His house:** Moses showed an amazing faithfulness in his ministry; but Jesus showed a *perfect* faithfulness - surpassing even that of Moses!

B. Jesus, superior to Moses.

1. (Heb\_3:3 a) Jesus has received more glory than Moses did. For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses,

a. **Moses:** Moses received much glory from God. This is seen in his shining face after spending time with God (Exo\_34:29-35), in his justification before Miriam and Aaron (Num\_12:6-8), and before the sons of Korah (Numbers 16).

b. **For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses did:** But Jesus received far more glory from the Father, at His baptism (Mat\_3:16-17), at His

transfiguration (Mar\_9:7), and at His resurrection (Act\_2:26-27 and Act\_2:31-33).

2. (Heb\_3:3-6) Why did Jesus receive more glory than Moses? Because Moses was a **servant** in God's house, but Jesus is both the *builder* of the house and a **Son** in it.

Inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things *is* God. And Moses indeed *was* faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken *afterward*, but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

a. **Inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house:** Moses was a *member* of the household of God, but Jesus is the creator of that **house**, worthy of greater glory.

i. The ancient Rabbis considered Moses to be the greatest man ever, greater than the angels. The writer to the Hebrews does nothing to criticize Moses; he only looks to properly exalt Jesus.

b. **Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant . . . but Christ as a Son over His own house:** Moses was a faithful **servant**, but he was never called a **Son** in the way Jesus is.

c. **Whose house we are if we hold fast:** We are a part of Jesus' household **if we hold fast**. The writer to the Hebrews is encouraging those who felt like turning back, helping them to **hold fast** by explaining the benefits of hanging in there.

i. True commitment to Jesus is demonstrated over the long term, not just in an initial burst. We trust that *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Php\_1:6).

ii. **Whose house we are:** 1Pe\_2:4-5 says we are *being built up a spiritual house*. God has a work to build through His

people, even as one might build a **house**.

C. The application of the fact of Jesus' superiority to Moses.

1. (Heb\_3:7-11) A quotation from Psa\_95:7-11 and its relevance.

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of trial in the wilderness, where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, 'They always go astray in *their* heart, and they have not known My ways.' So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

a. **Do not harden your hearts:** If those who followed Moses were responsible to surrender, trust and persevere in following God's leader, how much more are we responsible to do the same with a greater leader, Jesus?

b. **As in the rebellion, in the day of trial:** The **day of trial** refers first to the trial at Meribah (Num\_20:1-13). But more generally, it speaks of Israel's refusal to trust and enter the Promised Land during the Exodus (Num\_13:30 to Num\_14:10). God did not accept their unbelief and condemned that generation of unbelief to die in the wilderness

(Num\_14:22-23; Numbers 28-32).

c. **And saw My works forty years:** Because of their unbelief, the people of Israel faced judgment which culminated after **forty years**. This warning in Hebrews was written about **forty years** after the Jews' initial rejection of Jesus.

God's wrath was quickly coming upon the Jews who rejected Jesus, and would culminate with the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

d. **Therefore I was angry with that generation:** God's anger was kindled against **that generation** on account of their unbelief. They refused to trust God for the great things He had promised, and were unwilling to persist in trust.

2. (Heb\_3:12-15) **Beware:** Don't be like the generation that perished in the wilderness!

Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

a. **Lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief:** This is strong language, but we often underestimate the terrible nature of our **unbelief**. Refusing to believe God is such a serious sin because it shows **an evil heart** and a **departing from the living God**.

i. "Unbelief is not inability to understand, but *unwillingness* to *trust* . . . it is the will, not the intelligence, that is involved." (Newell) ii. One can truly believe God, yet be occasionally troubled by doubts. There is a doubt that *wants* God's promises but is weak in faith at the moment. **Unbelief** isn't weakness of faith; it sets itself in opposition to faith.

iii. "The great sin of not believing in the Lord Jesus Christ is often spoken of very lightly and in a very trifling spirit, as though it were scarcely any sin at all; yet, according to my text, and, indeed, according to the whole tenor of the Scriptures, unbelief is the giving of God the lie, and what can be worse?" (Spurgeon)

iv. "Hearken, O unbeliever, you have said, 'I cannot believe,' but it would be more honest if you had said, 'I *will* not believe.' The mischief lies there. Your unbelief is your fault, not your misfortune. It is a disease, but it is also a crime: it is a terrible source of misery to you, but it is justly so, for it is an atrocious offense against the God of truth." (Spurgeon)

v. "Did I not hear some one say, 'Ah, sir, I have been *trying* to believe for years.' Terrible words! They make the case still

worse. Imagine that after I had made a statement, a man should declare that he did not believe me, in fact, he could not believe me though he would like to do so. I should feel aggrieved certainly; but it would make matters worse if he added, 'In fact I have been for years trying to believe you, and I cannot do it.' What does he mean by that? What can he mean but that I am so incorrigibly false, and such a confirmed liar, that though he would like to give me some credit, he really cannot do it? With all the effort he can make in my favour, he finds it quite beyond his power to believe me? Now, a man who says, 'I have been trying to believe in God,' in reality says just that with regard to the Most High." (Spurgeon)

b. **Exhort one another daily**: If we will strengthen our faith and avoid the ruin of unbelief, we must be around other Christians who will **exhort** - that is, "seriously encourage" us.

i. How seriously do we take our responsibility to **exhort one another daily**, and to *be* exhorted? We judge and criticize rather well, but how well do we really **exhort**?

ii. If you are out of fellowship altogether, how can you exhort or be exhorted? What will keep you from becoming **hardened through the deceitfulness of sin**?

iii. This emphasis flies in the face of our society's thinking. A survey found that more than 78% of the general public and 70% of churchgoing people believe "you can be a *good* Christian without attending church." (Roof and McKinney)

c. **The deceitfulness of sin**: The sin of unbelief has its roots in *deceit*; and unbelief hardens us (**lest any of you be hardened**). Unbelief and sin is **deceitful** because when we are unbelieving towards God, we don't stop believing - we simply start believing in a deception.

d. **For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end**: If we have really **become partakers of Christ**, if we have

really heard **His voice**, we will **hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end**. Paul communicated the same idea in Php\_1:6.

i. But it isn't enough to leave the matter with a fatalistic "if you are really saved, you will endure." We have to realize that God uses these warnings and appeals to our will as His appointed means to build endurance in us.

There is no fatalism here!

e. **Do not harden your hearts:** We often say our hearts have been hardened by *others* or by *circumstances*. But the fact is that we harden our own hearts in *response* to what may be done to us.

3. (Heb\_3:16-19) It isn't enough to make a good beginning. For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, *was it* not all who came out of Egypt, *led* by Moses? Now with whom was He angry forty years? *Was it* not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

a. **For who, having heard, rebelled?** As a nation, Israel made a good beginning. After all, it took a lot of faith to cross the Red Sea! Yet *all* of that first generation perished in the wilderness, except for the two men of faith - Joshua and Caleb.

b. **They would not enter His rest:** 11 times in Hebrews chapters 3 and 4, Hebrews speaks of *entering rest*. That rest will be deeply detailed in the next chapter. But here, the *key* to entering rest is revealed: *belief*.

c. **So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief:** One might be tempted to think the key to entering rest is *obedience*, especially from Heb\_3:18 : *to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey?* But the disobedience mentioned in Heb\_3:18 is an outgrowth of the **unbelief** mentioned in Heb\_3:19. The **unbelief** came first, then the obedience.

i. In a New Testament context, our belief centers on the superiority of Jesus Christ, the truth of who He is (fully God and fully man) and His atoning work for us as a faithful High Priest (as in Heb\_2:17).

ii. When we trust in these things, making them the “food” of our souls, we enter into God’s rest.

d. Israel’s great failure was to persevere in faith. After crossing much of the wilderness trusting in God, and after seeing so many reasons to trust in Him, they end up falling short - because they did not persevere in faith in God and His promise.

i. Jesus reminded us in the parable of the soils with the seeds cast on stony ground and among thorns: it isn’t enough to make a good beginning, real belief perseveres to the end. If we have made a good start, praise God; but how we finish is even more important than how we start.

ii. C.S. Lewis speaks to the difficulty of persistence (from a tempting demon’s fictional perspective): “The Enemy has guarded him from you through the first great wave of temptations. But, if only he can be kept alive, you have time itself for you ally. The long, dull monotonous years of middle-aged prosperity or middle-aged adversity are excellent campaigning weather. You see, it is so hard for these creatures to *persevere*. The routine of adversity, the gradual decay of youthful loves and youthful hopes, the quiet despair (hardly felt as pain) of ever overcoming the chronic temptations with which we have again and again defeated them, the drabness which we create in their lives and inarticulate resentment with which we teach them to respond to it -- all this provides admirable opportunities of wearing out a soul by attrition. If, on the other hand, the middle years from prosperous, our position is even stronger. Prosperity knits a man to the World. He feels that he is ‘finding his place in it’ while really it is finding its place in him. . . . That is why we must often wish long life to our patients; seventy years is not a day too much for

the difficult task of unraveling their souls from Heaven and building up a firm attachment to the earth." ( *The Screwtape Letters*)

iii. Will the passing years wean us away from an on-fire, trusting relationship with the Lord? Or will they only serve to increase our life of trust and reliance on Jesus?

(Heb 3:2) who is faithful to the one who appointed him, as Moses was also in God's<sup>3</sup> house.<sup>4</sup>

(Heb 3:3) For he has come to deserve greater glory than Moses, just as the builder of a house deserves greater honor than the house itself!

(Heb 3:4) For every house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.

(Heb 3:5) Now Moses was **faithful in all God's<sup>5</sup> house<sup>6</sup>** as a servant, to testify to the things that would be spoken.

(Heb 3:6) But Christ<sup>7</sup> is faithful as a son over God's<sup>8</sup> house. We are of his house,<sup>9</sup> if in fact we hold firmly<sup>10</sup> to our confidence and the hope we take pride in.<sup>11</sup>

(Heb 3:7) ***Exposition of Psalm 95: Hearing God's Word in Faith***

Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says,<sup>12</sup>

" ***Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks!*** <sup>13</sup>

(Heb 3:8) " ***Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, in the day of testing in the wilderness.***

(Heb 3:9) " ***There your fathers tested me and tried me, <sup>14</sup> and they saw my works for forty years.***

(Heb 3:10) " ***Therefore, I became provoked at that generation and said, 'Their hearts are always wandering <sup>15</sup> and they have not known my ways. '***

(Heb 3:11) " ***As I swore in my anger, 'They will never enter my rest! ' <sup>16</sup>***

(Heb 3:12) See to it,<sup>17</sup> brothers and sisters,<sup>18</sup> that none of you has<sup>19</sup> an evil, unbelieving heart that forsakes<sup>20</sup> the



living God.<sup>21</sup>

(Heb 3:13) But exhort one another each day, as long as it is called "Today," that none of you may become hardened by sin's deception.

(Heb 3:14) For we have become partners with Christ, if in fact we hold our initial confidence<sup>22</sup> firm until the end.

(Heb 3:15) As it says,<sup>23</sup> " ***Oh, that today you would listen as he speaks! 24 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.***"<sup>25</sup>

(Heb 3:16) For which ones heard and rebelled? Was it not all who came out of Egypt under Moses' leadership?<sup>26</sup>

(Heb 3:17) And against whom was God<sup>27</sup> provoked for forty years? Was it not those who sinned, *whose dead bodies fell in the wilderness?*<sup>28</sup>

(Heb 3:18) And to whom did he swear they would never enter into his rest, except those who were disobedient?

(Heb 3:19) So<sup>29</sup> we see that they could not enter because of unbelief.

(Heb 4:1) ***God's Promised Rest***

Therefore we must be wary<sup>1</sup> that, while the promise of entering his rest remains open, none of you may seem to have come short of it.

(Guzik)

## **Heb 4:1-16**

### ***Hebrews 4 - ENTERING INTO HIS REST***

A. How to enter God's rest.

1. (Heb\_4:1-2) The warning is repeated: don't miss God's rest.

Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard *it*.

a. **Therefore:** The idea is carried on without pause from Hebrews 3 : *unbelief* kept the generation that escaped Egypt from entering Canaan. The **promise remains of entering His rest**, and we can enter into that **rest** by faith. *Unbelief* will make us fall short of the **rest** God has for us.

b. **For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them:** We have heard the promise of God's rest, just like the children of Israel did. They **heard** the word, but it **did not profit them**, because they did not receive it with **faith**.

i. They **heard** the promise. They had the opportunity to receive the promise. But they had actually enter by faith.

2. (Heb\_4:3-9) Proof that a "rest" remains for the people of God, beyond it's original fulfillment under Joshua.

For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh *day* in this way: "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works"; and again in this *place*: "They shall not enter My rest." Since therefore it remains that some *must* enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, again He designates a certain day, saying in David, "Today," after such a long time, as it has been said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts." For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. There remains therefore a rest for the people of God.

a. **So swore in My wrath:** This quote from Psa\_95:11 demonstrates that God has a **rest** available to us. This **rest** is after the pattern of God's own rest **on the seventh day from all His works**, as described in the quote from Gen\_2:2.

b. **Therefore it remains that some must enter it:** God did not create this place of rest in vain. If Israel (**those to**

**whom it was first preached) did not enter because of disobedience**, then someone else will enter into that rest.

c. **Today, if you will hear His voice**: The appeal in Psa\_95:7-8 proves that there is a rest that remains for God's people to enter, beyond the fulfillment under Joshua. If Joshua had completely fulfilled the promise of rest, God's appeal through **David**, saying "**Today**" would make no sense.

d. **There remains therefore a rest for the people of God**: All this together proves the point that there is a **rest for the people of God**. This is a **rest** that is spiritual, yet patterned after the rest provided through Joshua.

3. (Heb\_4:10) What this rest is: a cessation from works.

For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God *did* from His.

a. **He who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works**: Entering this rest means no longer needing to *work*. The idea isn't that there is no longer any place for *doing* good **works**. The idea is that there is no longer any place for **works** as a basis for our own righteousness.

b. **Ceased from his works as God did from His**: This cessation from works as a basis for righteousness fulfills our "Sabbath rest." God rested from His works on the original Sabbath of Gen\_2:2 because the work was finished. We cease from self-justifying works because the work is finished by Jesus on the cross.

4. (Heb\_4:11) Application of the invitation to enter God's rest through faith.

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience.

a. **Let us therefore**: This phrase, or this idea, appears repeatedly in Hebrews. A doctrinal truth is presented - in this case, the truth of a remaining rest available by faith - then the truth is applied.

b. **Be diligent to enter that rest:** The **rest** is there, but God does not force it upon us. We must **enter that rest**.

Clearly, the rest is entered by *faith*; but it takes **diligent** faith. This shows us that faith is not *passive*; it takes *diligence* to trust in, rely on, and cling to Jesus and His work for us.

c. **Lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience:** If we are not **diligent to enter that rest**, the result can be a disaster. We may **fall according to the same example of disobedience**. We may **fall**, even as the children of Israel did in the wilderness.

5. (Heb\_4:12-13) Found out by God's Word.

For the word of God *is* living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things *are* naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we *must give* account.

a. **For the word of God:** God's Word has diagnosed our illness with a surgeon's precision. It has seen our hearts, and discerned that we are too ready to follow in the failure of the children of Israel, to give up belief.

b. When the **word of God** exposes our weakness and unbelief like this, it demonstrates the inherent power, sharpness, and accuracy of the **word of God**. It bears constant reminding that as we submit ourselves to the **word of God**, we do it for far, far more than intellectual knowledge of the learning of facts. We do it for the *ministry of the Word*, because God *meets us* in His Word, and the *Holy Spirit* works powerfully through the **word of God**. We should consider just what the Word of God says it will do in our lives: i. God's word brings true health, fruitfulness, prosperity and success to the things we do. (Psa\_1:3)

ii. The word of God has healing power; it has the power to deliver us from oppression. (Psa\_107:20, Mat\_8:8, Mat\_8:16)

- iii. God's word is cleansing - if we take heed according to God's word, our way will be cleansed. (Psa\_119:9, Joh\_15:3, Eph\_5:26)
- iv. The word of God, hidden in our hearts, keeps us from sin. (Psa\_119:11)
- v. God's word is our counselor; as we delight in God's word, it becomes a rich source of counsel and guidance for us. (Psa\_119:24)
- vi. God's word is a source of strength. (Psa\_119:28)
- vii. God's word imparts life to us. It is a continual source of life for us. (Psa\_119:93, Mat\_4:4)
- viii. God's word is a source of illumination and guidance to us. When God's word comes in, so does light; it makes the simple wise and understanding. (Psa\_119:105, Psa\_119:130)
- ix. God's word gives peace to those who love it; they are secure, standing in a safe place. (Psa\_119:165)
- x. When the word of God is heard and understood, it bears fruit. (Mat\_13:23)
- xi. The word of God has inherent power and authority against demonic powers. (Luk\_4:36)
- xii. Jesus Himself - His eternal person - is described as the Word. When we are into the Word of God, we are into Jesus. (Joh\_1:1)
- xiii. Hearing God's Word is essential to eternal life - you cannot pass from death into life unless you have heard the Word of God. (Joh\_5:24, Jam\_1:21, 1Pe\_1:23)
- xiv. Abiding - living in - God's Word is evidence of true discipleship. (Joh\_8:31)
- xv. God's Word is the means to sanctification. (Joh\_17:17)
- xvi. God can do dramatic works with the Holy Spirit as His Word is being preached. (Act\_10:44)
- xvii. Hearing God's Word builds faith in us. (Rom\_10:17)
- xviii. Holding fast to the Word of God can give us present assurance of salvation. (1Co\_15:2)

xix. The faithful handling of the Word of God gives the ministers of the Word a clear conscience - they know that they have done all they can before God. (2Co\_4:2, Php\_2:16)

xx. The Word of God is our sword of the Spirit - it is our equipment for spiritual battle, especially in the idea of an offensive weapon. (Eph\_6:17)

xxi. The Word of God comes with the power of the Holy Spirit - with “much assurance” - and critical aspect of the ministry of the Word. (1Th\_1:5)

xxii. The Word of God works effectively in those who believe. (1Th\_2:13)

xxiii. The word of God sanctifies the very food we eat! (1Ti\_4:5)

xxiv. The word of God is not dead; it is living and active and sharper than any two edged sword. The word of God can probe us like a surgeon’s expert scalpel, cutting away what needs to be cut and keeping what needs to be kept. (Heb\_4:12)

xxv. The word of God is our source of growth. (1Pe\_2:2, 1Co\_2:1-5)

c. **Is living and powerful:** No wonder the writer to the Hebrews can say this. The Bible isn’t a collection of musty stories and myths. It has an *inherent* life and power. The preacher doesn’t make the Bible “come alive.” The Bible *is* alive, and gives life to the preacher and anyone else who will really receive it.

i. **Powerful** (translated *active* in the KJV) reminds us that something might be *alive*, yet *dormant*. But God’s Word is both **living** and **powerful**, in the sense of being *active*.

d. **Sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow:** God’s Word can hit us with surprising precision, and the Holy Spirit empowers the ministry of the Word to do deep work in our hearts.

i. Often people wonder how a preacher's message can be so *relevant* to their life. They sometimes honestly wonder if the preacher doesn't know some "inside information" about their life. But it isn't necessarily the preacher at all.

It is the sharpness of the Word of God, delivering the message in just the right place.

e. **Even to the division of soul and spirit:** Is there a deliberate and significant difference between **soul** and **spirit** here?

i. Certainly, there is *some* distinction between **soul** and **spirit**. "The New Testament use of *pneuma* for the human spirit focuses on the spiritual aspect of man, *i.e.* his life in relation to God, whereas *psyche* refers to man's life irrespective of his spiritual experience, *i.e.* his life in relation to himself, his emotions and thought. There is a strong antithesis between the two in the theology of Paul." (Guthrie)

ii. But the stress of this passage isn't to spell out a theology of the difference between **soul** and **spirit**. "Attempts to explain [these terms] on any psychological basis are futile. The form of expression is poetical, and signifies that the word penetrates to the inmost recesses of our spiritual being as a sword cuts through the joints and marrow of the body." (Vincent)

iii. However, it is important to understand what the Bible means when it speaks of and makes a distinction with **soul and spirit**. The Bible tells us that people have an "inner" and an "outer" nature (Gen\_2:7, 2Co\_4:16). The inner man is described by both the terms *spirit* (Act\_7:59, Mat\_26:41, Joh\_4:23-24) and *soul* (1Pe\_2:11, Heb\_6:19, Heb\_10:39). These two terms are often used synonymously, but not always. We can say that **soul** seems to focus more on *individuality* and life (often being defined as *the mind, the will, and the emotions*). The **spirit** seems to focus more on supernatural power and life in an individual.

iv. That there is *some* distinction between the spirit and the soul is made obvious by passages like 1Th\_5:23 and Heb\_4:12. The fact that the terms are *sometimes* used interchangeable is shown by passages like Job\_7:11 and Isa\_26:9.

v. Because the soul and spirit both have reference to the “inner man,” they are easily confused. Often an experience which only “blesses” the **soul** is supposed to be something which builds up the **spirit**. There is nothing wrong with “**soulish**” excitement and blessing, but there is nothing in it that builds us up **spiritually**. That is why many Christians go from one exciting experience to another but never really grow **spiritually** - the ministry they receive is “**soulish**.” This is why the Word of God is so powerful and precise; it can pierce **even to the division of soul and spirit**, which isn’t easy to do.

vi. The outer man is described by the terms *flesh* (Col\_2:5, Mat\_26:41, Gal\_5:16-17) and *body* (Rom\_6:6, Rom\_8:13, 1Co\_6:13 and 1Co\_6:19-20). The terms *flesh* and *body* also seem to include aspects of our person such as the senses and habits. When we allow our flesh to direct our thoughts and actions, it ends in spiritual ruin. God wants us to be directed not by the **spirit**, not by the *flesh*, or even the **soul**.

f. **All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account:** There is no one hidden before God. He sees our hearts and knows how to touch them, and we must **give account** for how we respond to His touch.

i. **Naked** reminds us of the way God saw through Adam’s feeble hiding. God sees through our hiding the same way.

ii. **Open** is the ancient Greek word *trachelizo*, used only here in the New Testament. It was used of wrestlers who had a hold that involved gripping the neck and was such a powerful hold that it brought victory. So the term can mean



“to prostrate” or “to overthrow;” but many scholars do adopt the simply meaning of “open.”

g. Remember the context. The writer to the Hebrews trusts that he has pierced the hearts of his audience, who were contemplating “giving up” on Jesus. In this passage, he has made it plain that they can’t give up on Jesus can keep it “hidden” from God. The word of God has discovered and exposed their condition.

B. Jesus our High Priest.

1. (Heb\_4:14) Seeing Jesus, our great High Priest.

Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast *our* confession.

a. **Seeing then that we have a great High Priest:** The idea that Jesus is our **High Priest** has been mentioned before (Heb\_2:17 and Heb\_3:1). But now the writer to the Hebrews will develop the idea more extensively.

b. **Seeing then:** The writer to the Hebrews wants to call attention to the specific, unique character of Jesus as our **High Priest**. No other High Priest was called **great**. No other **High Priest . . . passed through the heavens**. No other **High Priest** is the **Son of God**.

c. **Let us hold fast our confession:** Knowing that we have a **High Priest**, and know how unique and glorious He is, is wonderful. It is even greater to know that He has **passed through the heavens**, that He has ascended into heaven, and now ministers there on our behalf is even greater. Both of these things should encourage us to **hold fast our confession**.

2. (Heb\_4:15) Our High Priest can sympathize with us.

For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all *points* tempted as *we are*, yet without sin.

a. **We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize:** Though His deity has been documented (Heb\_1:4-14), His compassionate humanity has also been

demonstrated (Heb\_2:5-18). It means that there is a Jesus, God the Son, enthroned in heaven, our **High Priest**, can **sympathize with our weaknesses**.

i. To the Greeks, the primary attribute of God was *apatheia*, the essential inability to feel anything at all. Jesus isn't like that. He knows, He feels what we go through. The ancient Greek word for **sympathize** literally means "to suffer along with."

ii. What makes the difference is that Jesus added humanity to His deity, and came and lived among us as a man.

When you have been there, it makes all the difference. We might hear of some tragedy at a high school, and feel a measure of sorrow. But it is nothing like the pain we would feel if it were the high school we attended.

b. **But was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin:** Jesus knows what it is like to be **tempted** and to battle against sin, though He was never stained by sin. "His sinlessness was, at least in part, an earned sinlessness as he gained victory after victory in the constant battle with temptation that life in this world entails." (Morris)

i. Sometimes we think that because Jesus is God, He could never know temptation the way we do. In part, this is true: Jesus faced temptation much more severely than we ever have or ever will. The Sinless One knows temptation in a way we don't, because only the one who never gives into temptation knows the full strength of temptation. It is true that Jesus never faced temptation in an *inner* sense the way we do, because there was never a sinful nature pulling Him to sin from the *inside*. But He knew the strength and fury of *external* temptation in a way, and to a degree, that we can never know. He knows what we go through; He has faced worse.

3. (Heb\_4:16) An invitation: come to the throne of grace.

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

a. **Let us therefore come boldly:** Because we have a High Priest who is both omnipotent and compassionate, we can **come boldly** to His throne. Discouraging us from this access is a central strategy of Satan. The devil sometimes wants us to consider Jesus as unapproachable - perhaps encouraging us to come by Mary or the saints instead of Jesus. Sometimes the devil wants us to think of Jesus as being powerless to help, not as one who sits on a throne in heaven.

b. **The throne of grace:** The throne of God is a **throne of grace**. When we come, we may **obtain mercy** (this is *not getting* what we deserve) **and find grace** (this is *getting* what we don't deserve) in our **time of need**.

i. Rabbis taught that God had two thrones, one of mercy, and one of judgment. They said this because they knew that God was both merciful and just, but how could these two attributes of God be reconciled? Perhaps God had two thrones, displaying the two aspects of His character. On one throne He would show His judgment, and on the other His mercy. But here, in light of the finished work of Jesus, we see mercy and judgment reconciled into one **throne of grace**.

ii. Remember that grace does not ignore God's justice; it operates in fulfillment of God's justice, in light of the cross.

c. **Find grace to help in time of need:** Thankfully, God provides **help** in our time of need. No request is too small, because He wants us to *be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer . . . let your requests be made known to God*.

(Php\_4:6)

(Heb 4:2) For we had good news proclaimed to us just as they did. But the message they heard did them no good, since they did not join in<sup>2</sup> with those who heard it in faith.<sup>3</sup>

(Heb 4:3) For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, " ***As I swore in my anger, 'They will never***

***enter my rest!*** ' "4

And yet God's works<sup>5</sup> were accomplished from the foundation of the world.

(Heb 4:4) For he has spoken somewhere about the seventh day in this way: " ***And God rested on the seventh day from all his works,***"<sup>6</sup>

(Heb 4:5) but to repeat the text cited earlier:<sup>7</sup> " ***They will never enter my rest!*** "

(Heb 4:6) Therefore it remains for some to enter it, yet those to whom it was previously proclaimed did not enter because of disobedience.

(Heb 4:7) So God<sup>8</sup> again ordains a certain day, "Today," speaking through David<sup>9</sup> after so long a time, as in the words quoted before,<sup>10</sup>

" ***O, that today you would listen as he speaks!*** <sup>11</sup> ***Do not harden your hearts.***"

(Heb 4:8) For if Joshua had given them rest, God<sup>12</sup> would not have spoken afterward about another day.

(Heb 4:9) Consequently a Sabbath rest remains for the people of God.

(Heb 4:10) For the one who enters God's<sup>13</sup> rest has also rested from his works, just as God did from his own works.

(Heb 4:11) Thus we must make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one may fall by following the same pattern of disobedience.

(Heb 4:12) For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any double-edged sword, piercing even to the point of dividing soul from spirit, and joints from marrow; it is able to judge the desires and thoughts of the heart.

(Heb 4:13) And no creature is hidden from God,<sup>14</sup> but everything is naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must render an account.

(Heb 4:14) ***Jesus Our Compassionate High Priest***

Therefore since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.

(Heb 4:15) For we do not have a high priest incapable of sympathizing with our weaknesses, but one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet without sin.

(Heb 4:16) Therefore let us confidently approach the throne of grace to receive mercy and find grace whenever we need help.<sup>15</sup>

(Heb 5:1) For every high priest is taken from among the people<sup>1</sup> and appointed<sup>2</sup> to represent them before God,<sup>3</sup> to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

(Guzik)

### **Heb 5:1-14**

#### ***Hebrews 5 - JESUS, A PRIEST FOREVER***

A. Our Compassionate High Priest.

1. (Heb\_5:1-4) Principles of priesthood under the Law of Moses.

For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things *pertaining* to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins. He can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself is also subject to weakness. Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins. And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron *was*.

a. **For every high priest taken from among men:** God established both the priesthood and the office of high priest in the days of Moses, as described in Exo\_28:1 and following. The writer to the Hebrews neatly summarizes the work of the **high priest**, in saying **that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins**. The primary job of the **high priest** was the officiate, either directly or indirectly through lower-ranking priests, sacrifices unto the Lord.

i. The phrase **gifts and sacrifices for sins** reminds us that not every sacrifice was a blood atonement for sins.

Many of the ritual sacrifices were intended to be simple gifts to God, expressing thanks and desiring fellowship.

b. **He can have compassion:** Ideally, the **high priest** was more than a “butcher” offering sacrifice. He also had **compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray**, and ministered the atoning sacrifices with a loving heart for the people. In this ideal, the **high priest** has this **compassion** because he understands that **he himself is also subject to weakness**.

i. God made specific commands to help insure the **high priest** would minister with compassion. In the breastplate of the **high priest** were set twelve stones engraved with the names of the tribes of Israel, and on the shoulder straps were stones engraved with the names of the tribes. In this, the people of Israel were always on the *heart* and on the *shoulders* of the **high priest** (Exo\_28:4-30).

c. **Because of this he is required as for the people, so also for himself, to offer sacrifices for sins:** God also made specific commands to help insure the **high priest** would minister with awareness that he was **also subject to weakness**. On the Day of Atonement, the **high priest** had to sacrifice for himself first, to remind himself and the nation that he had sin to atone for, just like the rest of the people of Israel (Lev\_16:1-6).

d. **And no man takes this honor to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was:** Of course, the High Priest was taken *from* the community of God’s people; but was not *chosen* by God’s people, but appointed by God *for* His people. But it was important to state that **no man takes this honor to himself**. The office of high priest was nothing to aspire to or campaign for. It was given by right of birth, it was chosen by God. It was an honor no man could *take* to himself.

i. The true priesthood, and the **high priest**, came from a specific line of descent. Every priest came from Jacob,

Abraham's grandson, whose name was changed to Israel. Every priest came from Levi, one of Israel's thirteen sons. God set the tribe of Levi apart as a tribe committed to His service and as representatives of the whole nation (Exo\_13:2; Num\_3:40-41). Gershon, Kohath and Merari were Levi's three sons; each of these family lines had their own duties. The family of Gershon had care of the tabernacle's screen (veil), fence, and curtains (Num\_3:25-26). The family of Kohath will this family had care of the tabernacle's furnishings, such as the lampstand, altar of incense, and the ark of the covenant (Num\_3:31-32). The family of Merari had care of the boards and pillars of the tabernacle and the fence (Num\_3:36-37). These families were not properly *priests*, though they were *Levites*. The priesthood itself came through Aaron, the brother of Moses, of the family of Kohath. Aaron's family and their descendants made up the priests and the high priest, those able to serve in the tabernacle itself and to offer sacrifice to God. The high priest was generally the eldest son of Aaron, except if they disqualified themselves like Nadab and Abihu (Lev\_10:1-3) or according to the regulations of Leviticus 21. In this sense, the priesthood was not popularly elected, but chosen by God, not appointed by man.

ii. There are some dreadful instances where men presumed to act as priests who were not priests, such as Korah (Numbers 16), Saul (1 Samuel 13) and Uzziah (2Ch\_26:16).

iii. We can also not take the honor of being our own priest. It is great arrogance to think we can approach God on our own, without a priest; but it is great superstition to think we need any other priest other than Jesus Christ Himself. God has provided a mediator, a priest, and we must avail ourselves of the priest God has provided.

iv. "A sinner can undertake to manage nothing towards God immediately, or by himself, but with a mediating

priest, who must know God's mind and perform it . . . The common sense of mankind about it since the fall doth evidence it; no nation being without a religion, a temple, a place of worship, or a priest." (Poole)

2. (Heb\_5:5-6) Jesus is qualified to be our High Priest.

So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, *but it* was He who said to Him: "You are My Son, today I have begotten You." As *He* also says in another *place*: "You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek"; a.

**Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest:**

Jesus did not make Himself High Priest. Instead, just as much as Jesus was declared to be the **Son** (Psa\_2:7), He was also declared to be **a priest forever** (in Psa\_110:4).

i. It was easy to see why the priesthood of Jesus would be difficult for early Jewish Christians to grasp. He was not from the lineage of Aaron. Jesus claimed nor practiced no special ministry in the temple. He confronted the

religious structure instead of joining it. In Jesus' day, the priesthood also become a corrupt institution. The custom had become High Priest in those days through intrigue and politicking among the corrupt priesthood.

ii. **A priest forever** is an important contrast. Jesus' priesthood (like Melchizedek's) is unending, but no High Priest descended from Aaron ever had a **forever** priesthood.

b. **Today I have begotten You** refers to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. At that time He fully assumed His role as our great High Priest, *having been perfected* (Heb\_5:9).

i. Jesus' resurrection demonstrated that He was not a priest like Aaron, who had to atone for his own sin first. The resurrection vindicated Jesus as the Father's *Holy One* (Act\_2:24; Act\_2:27), who bore the wrath sinners deserve, without becoming a sinner Himself.

c. Hebrews 7 will more fully develop the theme of Jesus as a High Priest **according to the order of Melchizedek**.

3. (Heb\_5:7-11 a) The compassion of Jesus, our High Priest.



Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” of whom we have much to say,

a. **When He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears:** The agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mat\_26:36-39, Luk\_22:44) proves He knows what it is like to struggle with the difficulty of

obedience, yet He obeyed perfectly.

i. This answers the question, “How can this glorious, enthroned Jesus know what I am going through down here?” He knows; obedience did not always come easy for Jesus.

b. The word for **supplications** is *hiketeria*. This ancient Greek word essentially means “an olive branch wrapped in wool,” because that is what someone in Greek culture would hold and wave to express their desperate prayer and desire. Significantly, this supplication of Jesus took place in a garden of olives - and he supplied the “wool,” being the Lamb of God!

c. **And was heard because of His godly fear:** If Jesus asked that the cup be taken away from Him (Luk\_22:42), and the cup was not taken away, how can it be said that He **was heard**? Because His prayer was not to escape His Father’s will, but to *accept* it - and that prayer was definitely heard.

d. **He learned obedience by the things which He suffered:** How could Jesus (who never stopped being God) *learn* anything? Then again, how does God, enthroned in heaven *experience obedience*, except by casting off the glory of the throne and humbling Himself as Jesus did?

i. Jesus did not pass from disobedience to **obedience**. He learned **obedience** by actually obeying. Jesus did not learn *how* to obey; He learned what is involved in obedience.

e. **He learned obedience by things which He suffered:** Suffering was used to teach Jesus. If suffering was fit to teach the Son of God, we must never despise it as a tool of instruction in our lives.

i. Some say that we *might* learn through suffering; but such lessons are only God's second best. God really intends for us just to learn by His Word, and it is never His real plan for us to learn through trials and suffering. But was Jesus ever in the Father's *second best*?

ii. The Bible never teaches that strong faith will keep a Christian from all suffering. Christians are appointed to affliction (1Th\_3:3). It is through many tribulations we enter the kingdom of God (Act\_14:22), and our current suffering is the prelude to glorification (Rom\_8:17).

f. **Having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation:** Jesus' experience of suffering makes Him perfectly suited to be the **author** (the source, the cause) of our salvation.

i. Some don't want Jesus to be the **author** of their salvation. They want to write their own book of salvation. God won't read it! Only Jesus can **author** your eternal salvation.

g. Notice that this salvation is extended to **all who obey Him**. In this sense, **all who obey Him** is used synonymously for believing on Him - which simply assumes that believers will obey!

h. **Called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek"** : The emphasis is repeated. Jesus is a **High Priest**, who was **called by God** (not personal ambition), according to the order of **Melchizedek**. The **much to say** comes in Hebrews 7.

B. An exhortation to maturity.

1. (Heb\_5:11 b) Their dullness of hearing is exposed.

And hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing.

a. **Since you have become dull of hearing:** This explains why the writer doesn't go into the topic of Melchizedek right away. He wants to address some critical basics before going on to more intricate topics, but their spiritual condition makes it **hard to explain**.

i. He fears the discussion of Aaron and Melchizedek and Jesus will sound too academic and theoretical to his readers. At the same time, he recognizes this says more about his **dull hearers** than the *message*.

ii. Being **dull of hearing** is not a problem with the ears, but a problem with the heart - you just aren't really interested in what God has to say to you. Not wanting to hear the Word of God points to a genuine spiritual problem!

b. These Christians who felt like giving up with Jesus were also **dull of hearing**. The dullness usually comes first, then the desire to give up. Watch out when the Word of God starts seeming dull to you!

c. They have **become dull of hearing**. **Become** is an important word. It indicates that they didn't start out that **dull of hearing**, but became that way.

2. (Heb\_5:12 a) Their failure to mature is exposed.

For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need *someone* to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; a. **By this time:** According to the time they had been followers of Jesus, they should have been much more mature than they were.

b. **You ought to be teachers:** It wasn't that these were unique people who would hold a unique role of teaching. Instead, they **ought to be teachers** in the sense that all Christians should be teachers.

i. There is an important sense in which every Christian must be a teacher, because we can all help disciple others.

We really only master something after we have effectively taught it to someone else. Teaching is the final step of learning.

c. **You need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God:** This isn't to their credit. It isn't that **the first principles** are "beneath" the mature Christian. Rather, the sense is that one should be able to teach one's self, and remind one's self of these **first principles of the oracles of God**.

3. (Heb\_5:12-14) A contrast between *milk* and *solid food*.

And you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes *only* of milk *is* unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, *that is*, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

a. **And you have come to need milk:** **Milk** corresponds to the *first principles* of Heb\_6:12. **Solid food** is the "meatier" material such as understanding the connection between Jesus and Melchizedek. It isn't that **milk** is bad; but these Christians should have added **solid food** to their diet. Peter reminds us all *as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby* (1Pe\_2:2).

b. In the original language, the sense of **for he is a babe** is *for he has become a babe*. There is nothing more delightful than a true babe in Jesus. But there is nothing more irritating and depressing than someone who should be mature but who has *become a babe*!

i. Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps your Christian life is unstable. Babies are handed from one person to another; babes are *tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine* (Eph\_4:14-16).

ii. Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are divisive in your Christian life. Babies each have their own crib that they stick to; babes have their particular denomination or church that they think of as "my church."

iii. Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are star-struck by Christian celebrities of one kind or another. Babies are focused on one particular person (mommy); babes glory in men ( *I am of Paul, I am of Apollos*).

iv. Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are spiritually asleep. Babies need a lot of sleep; babes spend much time spiritually asleep.

v. Have you **become a babe**? Perhaps you are fussy and cranky with others. Babies can be cranky; babes will fuss over any little thing.

c. **Is unskilled in the word of righteousness**: Those who have *become* babes reveal themselves because they are **unskilled in the word of righteousness**. We don't expect brand new Christians to be *skilled in the word of righteousness*, but those who have been Christians for a time should be.

d. **Who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil**: Our **senses** are **exercised** (trained by practice and habit) **to discern both good and evil** (doctrinally, not morally). How are our **senses exercised**? Plainly, **by reason of use**. When we decide to **use** discernment, we mature.

i. These Christians demonstrated immaturity by both their lack of discernment between **good and evil** and in their contemplation of giving up with Jesus. The mature Christian is marked by their discernment and by their unshakable commitment to Jesus Christ.

ii. The ability to **discern** is a critical measure of spiritual maturity. Babies will put *anything* in their mouths!

Babes are weak in discernment, and will accept any kind of spiritual food.

e. **Have their senses exercised**: It can be said that all five human senses have their spiritual counterparts.

i. We have a spiritual sense of taste: *If indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious* (1Pe\_2:3). *Taste and see that the LORD is good!* (Psa\_34:8) ii. We have a spiritual sense of hearing: *Hear and your soul shall live* (Isa\_55:3). *He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches* (Rev\_2:7).

iii. We have a spiritual sense of sight: *Open my eyes, that I may see wondrous things from Your law* (Psa\_119:18).

*The eyes of your understanding (heart) being enlightened* (Eph\_1:18).

iv. We have a spiritual sense of smell: *He shall be of quick scent in the fear of the LORD* (Isa\_11:3, RV margin). *I am full, having received from . . . you, a sweet-smelling aroma* (Php\_4:18).

v. We have a spiritual sense of touch or feeling: *Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the LORD* (2Ki\_22:19). *The hardening of their heart; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to licentiousness* (Eph\_4:18-19).

(Heb 5:2) He is able to deal compassionately with those who are ignorant and erring, since he also is subject to weakness, (Heb 5:3) and for this reason he is obligated to make sin offerings for himself as well as for the people.

(Heb 5:4) And no one assumes this honor<sup>4</sup> on his own initiative,<sup>5</sup> but only when called to it by God,<sup>6</sup> as in fact Aaron was.

(Heb 5:5) So also Christ did not glorify himself in becoming high priest, but the one who glorified him was God,<sup>7</sup> who said to him, "**You**

**are my Son! Today I have fathered you,"**<sup>8</sup>

(Heb 5:6) as also in another place God<sup>9</sup> says, "**You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.**"<sup>10</sup>

(Heb 5:7) During his earthly life<sup>11</sup> Christ<sup>12</sup> offered<sup>13</sup> both requests and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death and he was heard because of his devotion.

(Heb 5:8) Although he was a son, he learned obedience through the things he suffered.<sup>14</sup>

(Heb 5:9) And by being perfected in this way, he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him,

(Heb 5:10) and he was designated<sup>15</sup> by God as high priest **in the order of Melchizedek.**<sup>16</sup>

(Heb 5:11) ***The Need to Move on to Maturity***

On this topic we have much to say<sup>17</sup> and it is difficult to explain, since you have become sluggish<sup>18</sup> in hearing.

(Heb 5:12) For though you should in fact be teachers by this time,<sup>19</sup> you need someone to teach you the beginning elements of God's utterances.<sup>20</sup> You have gone back to needing<sup>21</sup> milk, not<sup>22</sup> solid food.

(Heb 5:13) For everyone who lives on milk is inexperienced in the message of righteousness, because he is an infant.

(Heb 5:14) But solid food is for the mature, whose perceptions are trained by practice to discern both good and evil.

(Heb 6:1) Therefore we must progress beyond<sup>1</sup> the elementary<sup>2</sup> instructions about Christ<sup>3</sup> and move on<sup>4</sup> to maturity, not laying this foundation again: repentance from dead works and faith in God, (Guzik)

**Heb 6:1-20**

***Hebrews 6 - A WARNING TO DISCOURAGED BELIEVERS***

A. The essential nature of maturity.

1. (Heb\_6:1 a) Going beyond the basics.

Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary *principles* of Christ, let us go on to perfection, a. **Therefore:** The writer has just rebuked his readers for their spiritual immaturity; but he knows that nothing is gained by treating them as immature. So he moves on to other ideas.

b. **Elementary principles:** This has the idea of “rudiments” or “ABCs.” They are basic building blocks that are necessary, but must be built upon - otherwise you just have a foundation and no structure.

c. **Perfection:** This is the ancient Greek word *teleiotes*, which is much better understood as “maturity.” The writer to the Hebrews is not trying to tell us that we can reach perfection on this side of eternity, but we can and should reach a place of maturity in Jesus. So the call is plain: **let us go on to perfection.**

2. (Heb\_6:1-2) Some of the “basics” to go beyond.

Not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

a. These “basics” are given in three pairs: **repentance** and **faith** go together. **Baptisms** and **laying on of hands** go together. **Resurrection of the dead** and **eternal judgment** go together.

b. **Not laying again the foundation:** Many people regard this as a Biblical list of important “foundations” for the Christian life. Bible study series have been taught developing each one of these topics, out of the thought that this is good list of basic doctrines. But that isn’t the writer’s point here at all. To understand this list, you must ask a basic question: What is distinctively *Christian* about this list? Where is the specific mention of Jesus or salvation by grace alone? Can you believe or practice these things and not be a follower of Jesus Christ, believing Him to be the Messiah?

i. “When we consider the ‘rudiments’ one by one, it is remarkable how little in the list is distinctive of Christianity, for practically every item could have its place in a fairly orthodox Jewish community. . . . Each of them, indeed, acquires a new significance in a Christian context; but the impression we get is that existing Jewish beliefs and practices were used as a foundation on which to build Christian truth.” (Bruce)

c. Not even **baptisms**, as it is used in this passage, is necessarily Christian. The specific ancient Greek word translated **baptisms** is *not* the word regularly used in the New Testament to describe Christian baptism. It is the word used on two other specific occasions (Heb\_9:10 and Mar\_7:4) to refer to Jewish ceremonial washings.

i. The New English Bible translation reflects this, translating **doctrine of baptisms** as “instruction about cleansing



rites.”

d. In this case, the *elementary principles* to move beyond are all items in the “common ground” between Christianity and Judaism. This was a “safe” common ground these Jewish Christians retreated to.

i. Because Christianity did grow out of Judaism, it was a more subtle temptation for a Jewish Christian to slip back into Judaism than it was for a formerly pagan Christian to go back to his pagan ways.

ii. Of course, these Jewish Christians did not want to abandon *religion*, but they did want to make it less distinctively *Christian*. Therefore, they went back to this “common ground” to avoid persecution. Living in this comfortable common ground, you would not stick out so much. A Jew and a Christian together could say, “Let’s repent, let’s have faith, let’s perform ceremonial washings,” and so forth. But this was a subtle denial of Jesus.

iii. This is entirely characteristic of those who feel discouraged, and wish to give up. There is always the temptation to still be religious, but not so “fanatical” about Jesus.

3. (Heb\_6:3) A statement of hope and dependence on God. And this we will do if God permits.

a. **If God permits:** This should not be taken as implying that God may not want them to go on to maturity, past those basics common to Christianity and Judaism.

b. Instead, **if God permits** expresses the believers’ complete dependence on God. If we do press on to maturity, we realize that it only happens at God’s pleasure.

B. The danger of falling away.

1. Understanding an approach to controversial passages like this.

a. We must first be concerned with understanding what the text says (exposition), before we are concerned with fitting what it says into a system of theology.

b. Systems of theology are important, because the Bible *does not* contradict itself; but the way to right systems *begins with a right understanding of the text, not one that bends the text to fit into a system.*

i. “We come to this passage ourselves with the intention to read it with the simplicity of a child, and whatever we find therein to state it; and if it may not seem to agree with something we have hitherto held, we are prepared to cast away every doctrine of our own, rather than one passage of Scripture.” (Spurgeon)

ii. “We had better far be inconsistent with ourselves than with the inspired Word. I have been called an Arminian Calvinist or a Calvinistic Arminian, and I am quite content so long as I can keep close to my Bible.” (Spurgeon)

c. Satan knows Scripture, and this passage has rightly been called “one of the Devil’s favorite passages” for its ability to be taken out of context for condemning the struggling believer. Many have felt like giving up after hearing Satan “preach a sermon” on this text!

2. (Heb\_6:4-6) The impossibility of repentance for those who have fallen away after receiving blessing from God.

For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

a. **For it is impossible:** The word **impossible** is put in a position of emphasis. The writer to the Hebrews is not saying it is just difficult, but truly without possibility.

i. Note the other uses of **impossible** in Hebrews: It is *impossible* for God to lie (Heb\_6:18). It is *impossible* that the blood of bulls and goats can take away sin (Heb\_10:4). Without faith it is *impossible* to please God (Heb\_11:6).

ii. “This word **\*impossible** *stands immovable.*” (Alford)

b. **Who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come:** Their experience is impressive. The big debate is whether this is the experience of salvation, or the experience of something short of salvation.

i. **Enlightened:** This ancient Greek word has the same meaning as the English word. These people have experienced the light of God shining upon them.

ii. **Tasted:** This word speaks of a full, real experience (as in how Jesus *tasted death* in Heb\_2:9). **The heavenly gift** is probably salvation (Rom\_6:23 and Eph\_2:8).

iii. **Partakers of the Holy Spirit** is an unique term, having to do with receiving the Holy Spirit and having fellowship with the Holy Spirit.

iv. **Tasted the good word of God** means they have experienced the goodness of God's word, and have seen its work in their lives.

v. The **powers of the age of come** is a way to describe God's supernatural power. The ones written of here have indeed **tasted** of these powers.

c. One of the most heated debates over any New Testament passage is focused on this text. The question is simple: Are these people who have had these impressive spiritual experiences in fact Christians? Are they God's elect, chosen before the foundation of the world?

i. Commentators divide on this issue, each deciding the issue with great certainty but with no agreement.

ii. Remember that one can have great spiritual experiences and still not be saved (Mat\_7:21-23). One can even do many religious things and still not be saved. The perfect example of this are the Pharisees, who evangelized (Mat\_23:15), prayed impressively (Mat\_23:14), made religious commitments (Mat\_23:16), tithed rigorously

(Mat\_23:23), honored religious traditions (Mat\_23:29-31) and who fasted (Luk\_18:12).

iii. Yet, from a *human perspective*, who would call anyone who seemed to have the credentials mentioned in Heb\_6:4-5 a non-Christian? We might make that person an elder! From all *human observation*, we must say these are Christians spoken of in Heb\_6:4-5.

iv. It is possible to display some fruit or spiritual growth, then to die spiritually, showing that the “soil of the heart” was never right (Mar\_4:16-19).

v. So are they Christians? From a human perspective we would say they are. Yet, from God’s perspective, it is impossible to say on this side of eternity.

d. **For it is impossible . . . if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance:** If these people are Christians or not, once they have come to this place, it is **impossible** for them to repent.

i. If these are just Christians who “lost their salvation,” the terrible fact is that they can *never* regain it. This passage was used by some in the early church (like Montanists and Novatianists) to say that there was no possibility of restoration if one sinned significantly after their baptism.

ii. Others have explained it by saying that this is all merely a hypothetical warning, in light of Heb\_6:9. So, they say, no one can really lose their salvation. But what good is it to warn someone against something that can’t happen?

iii. Still others think that this penalty deals only with reward, not with salvation itself. They stress the idea that **repentance** is called **impossible**, not *salvation*.

iv. This difficult passage is best understood in the context of Heb\_6:1-2. The writer to the Hebrews means that if they do retreat back to Judaism, all the religious “repentance” in the world will do them no good. Their forsaking

of Jesus is tantamount to crucifying Him all over again, especially if they were to express their repentance in traditional Jewish forms: especially animal sacrifice, which denies the total work of Jesus for them on the cross.

e. **If they fall away:** Remember there is a great difference between *falling* and **falling away**. Falling away isn't just falling into some sin, it is actually departing from Jesus Himself. *For a righteous man may fall seven times and rise again, but the wicked shall fall by calamity.* (Pro\_24:16) The difference is between a Peter and a Judas. If you depart from Jesus, there is no hope!

i. The message to these Christians who felt like giving up was clear: if you don't continue on with Jesus, don't suppose you will find salvation by just going on with the old basics that are common to Judaism; if you aren't saved in Jesus, you aren't saved!

ii. If one falls like this, does it mean they can't repent? That God *prohibits* their repentance? Remember first that repentance itself is a gift from God; no one genuinely repents without God's enabling. Second, if one does repent, that in itself is evidence that they have not truly fallen away.

iii. The idea is not that "if you fall away, you can't come back to Jesus ever," but that "if you turn your back on Jesus, don't expect to find salvation anywhere else, especially in the foundations of Judaism apart from the fullness

of Jesus."

iv. "This passage has nothing to do with those who fear lest it condemns them. The presence of that anxiety, like the cry which betrayed the real mother in the days of Solomon, establishes beyond a doubt that you are not one that

has fallen away beyond the possibility of renewal to repentance." (Meyer)

3. (Heb\_6:7-8) An illustration of the serious consequences of falling away.

For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; but if it bears thorns and briars, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

a. **For the earth which drinks in the rain . . . and bears herbs useful . . . receives blessing from God:**

When the **earth** receives rain, and then **bears** useful plants, it then fulfills its purpose and justifies the blessing of rain sent upon it. The writer to the Hebrews applies the point: “You’ve been blessed. But where’s the fruit?” God is looking for what grows in us after He blesses us, especially what grows in terms of maturity.

b. **But if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected:** If ground that is blessed by rain refuses to bear fruit, then who can blame the farmer for burning it?

c. The picture presented reminds us that growth and bearing fruit is important to keep from falling away. When we really bear fruit, we abide in Jesus (Joh\_15:5) and in no danger of falling away.

C. Don’t be discouraged!

1. (Heb\_6:9) The writer admits he is being a little more harsh than he needs to be.

But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner.

a. **We are confident of better things concerning you:**

Though he spoke so severely, the writer to the Hebrews is confident that they really will continue on in Jesus, that their perseverance is one of the **things that accompany salvation**.

b. **Though we speak in this manner:** However, it would be wrong to take Heb\_6:9 to mean the warnings in the previous verses were not serious, or warned of impossible things. If anything, verse nine is a verse of encouragement;

these Christians are in danger of falling away not so much out of a calculated rebellion, as because of a depressing discouragement. They need to be warned, but they also need to be encouraged!

2. (Heb\_6:10-12) Don't be discouraged into giving up on Jesus! God hasn't forgotten about you!

For God *is* not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, *in that* you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

a. **God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love:** When we are discouraged, we often think God has forgotten all we have done for Him and His people. But God would cease to be God (He would be **unjust**) if He forgot such things. God sees and remembers.

i. How many lose sight of the fact that God sees their service? How many serve for the applause and attention of man, and are discouraged because it doesn't come?

b. **We desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end:** Keep up your good work; press on with that hope until the end; imitate those who **inherit** (not earn) God's promises. When we are discouraged as the Hebrew Christians were discouraged we can easily **become sluggish**. The writer to Hebrews encourages us like a coach, pressing us to press on.

c. **But imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises:** Imitate those who found the key to gaining God's promises - **faith and patience**, as demonstrated by Abraham.

i. But, praise God, Abraham did not have a *perfect* faith or a *perfect* patience! If Abraham had some of our weaknesses, then we can have some of his **faith and patience**.

d. **Do not become sluggish:** Don't let discouragement make you **sluggish**. It's that **sluggish** attitude that really makes us feel like giving up. First we lose the desire to *press* on then we lose the desire to *go* on.

i. You really don't have to give into discouragement. *David encouraged himself in the Lord his God* (1Sa\_30:6, KJV). So can you! Encourage yourself in the Lord!

3. (Heb\_6:13-18) Don't be discouraged: God's promises are reliable.

For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, saying, "Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you." And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise. For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation *is* for them an end of all dispute. Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed *it* by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it *is* impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before *us*.

a. **After he had patiently endured:** During this time of patient endurance, many Christians get attacked. They wonder if they too will obtain **the promise**. They often wonder "Will God *really* come through?"

b. **After he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise:** God came through for Abraham, even sealing His **promise** with an oath. In fact, **because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself**. This oath showed that God's promises (like His character) are unchanging.

i. "This passage teaches us . . . that an oath may be lawfully used by Christians; and this ought to be particularly observed, on account of fanatical men who are disposed to abrogate the practices of solemn swearing which God has prescribed in his Law." (Calvin)



c. **That by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation:** The **two immutable** (unchanging) **things** are God's *promise* and His *oath*. It is **impossible for God to lie** in either of these two things.

d. **We might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us:** Don't be discouraged! God has a **refuge** of **hope** ready for you. We can think of this **refuge** of **hope** are like the cities of refuge commanded by the Law of Moses, as described in Numbers 35.

i. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are **within easy reach** of the needy person; they were of no use unless someone could get to the place of refuge.

ii. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are *open to all*, not just the Israelite; no one needs to fear that they would be turned away from their place of refuge in their time of need.

iii. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge became a place where the one in need would *live*; you didn't come to a city of refuge in time of need just to look around.

iv. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge are the *only alternative* for the one in need; without this specific protection, they will be destroyed.

v. Both Jesus and the cities of refuge provide protection *only within their boundaries*; to go outside meant death.

vi. With both Jesus and the cities of refuge, full freedom comes with the *death of the High Priest*.

vii. However, there is *a crucial distinction* between Jesus and the cities of refuge. The cities of refuge only helped the *innocent*; the *guilty* can come to Jesus and find refuge.

4. (Heb\_6:19-20) Don't be discouraged! Jesus will lead us into God's glory.

This *hope* we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence *behind* the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us, *even* Jesus, having

become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

a. **This hope we have as an anchor:** The **anchor** was a common figure for **hope** in the ancient world. Here it especially reminds us that we are anchored to something firm, but unseen (**which enters the Presence behind the veil**).

i. You don't need an **anchor** for calm seas. The rougher the weather, the more important your **anchor**!

ii. But the **anchor** analogy doesn't apply perfectly. We are anchored *upward in heaven*, not down in the ground; and we are anchored to *move on*, not to stand still!

b. **Which enters the Presence behind the veil, where the forerunner has entered for us:** This hope will see us into the very **presence** of God. **Hope** is the opposite of the discouragement these Jewish Christians have been battling against.

c. **The forerunner . . . even Jesus:** We are assured of this access into the presence of God because Jesus has entered as a **forerunner**. The Levitical high priest did not enter the veil as a forerunner, only as a representative. But Jesus has entered into the Father's intimate **presence** so that His people can follow Him there.

i. A **forerunner** (the ancient Greek word *prodromos*) was a reconnaissance man in the military. A **forerunner** goes forward, knowing that others are going to follow!

d. **Behind the veil . . . having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek:** The temple analogy (**behind the veil**) reminds the writer to the Hebrews that he was speaking of Jesus as our **High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek**. The thought continues into the next chapter.

(Heb 6:2) teaching about baptisms, laying on of hands, resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment.

(Heb 6:3) And this is what we intend to do,5 if God permits.

(Heb 6:4) For it is impossible in the case of those who have once been enlightened, tasted the heavenly gift, become partakers of the Holy Spirit, (Heb 6:5) tasted the good word of God and the miracles of the coming age, (Heb 6:6) and then have committed apostasy,<sup>6</sup> to renew them again to repentance, since<sup>7</sup> they are crucifying the Son of God for themselves all over again<sup>8</sup> and holding him up to contempt.

(Heb 6:7) For the ground that has soaked up the rain that frequently falls on<sup>9</sup> it and yields useful vegetation for those who tend it receives a blessing from God.

(Heb 6:8) But if it produces thorns and thistles, it is useless and about to be cursed;<sup>10</sup> its fate is to be burned.

(Heb 6:9) But in your case, dear friends, even though we speak like this, we are convinced of better things relating to salvation.

(Heb 6:10) For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love you have demonstrated for his name, in having served and continuing to serve the saints.

(Heb 6:11) But we passionately want each of you to demonstrate the same eagerness for the fulfillment of your hope until the end, (Heb 6:12) so that you may not be sluggish,<sup>11</sup> but imitators of those who through faith and perseverance inherit the promises.

(Heb 6:13) Now when God made his promise to Abraham, since he could swear by no one greater, he swore by himself,

(Heb 6:14) saying, " ***Surely I will bless you greatly and multiply your descendants abundantly.***"<sup>12</sup>

(Heb 6:15) And so by persevering, Abraham<sup>13</sup> inherited the promise.

(Heb 6:16) For people<sup>14</sup> swear by something greater than themselves,<sup>15</sup> and the oath serves as a confirmation to end all dispute.<sup>16</sup>

(Heb 6:17) In the same way<sup>17</sup> God wanted to demonstrate more clearly to the heirs of the promise that his purpose was unchangeable,<sup>18</sup>

and so he intervened with an oath,  
(Heb 6:18) so that we who have found refuge in him<sup>19</sup> may find strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us through two unchangeable things, since it is impossible for God to lie.

(Heb 6:19) We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, sure and steadfast, which reaches inside behind the curtain,<sup>20</sup>

(Heb 6:20) where Jesus our forerunner entered on our behalf, since he became ***a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.***<sup>21</sup>

(Heb 7:1) N ***The Nature of Melchizedek's Priesthood***

ow this ***Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, met Abraham as he was returning from defeating the kings and blessed him.***<sup>1</sup>

(Guzik)

### **Heb 7:1-28**

### ***Hebrews 7 - A BETTER PRIESTHOOD, A BETTER HIGH PRIEST***

A. The theme of Hebrews 7.

1. The writer to the Hebrews will explain a theme that he has introduced way back in Heb\_2:17 : Jesus as our High Priest.

a. He had begun to discuss the issue in Heb\_5:10, but had to spend some time warning these discouraged Christians about the danger of not continuing and progressing in their Christian life.

2. These Jewish Christians would be very interested in Jesus as their High Priest, but would have a significant intellectual objection to the idea. This is because Jesus did not come from the priestly tribe (the tribe of Levi) or the priestly family (the family of Aaron).

a. The writer to the Hebrews wants to remove these intellectual problems the Jewish Christians had with the gospel. These intellectual hang-ups were keeping them from continuing on to maturity in Jesus.

b. In the same way, too many Christians are hung up on intellectual things that could be resolved so they could move on with Jesus. If a Christian is hung up on issues like creation and evolution, the validity of miracles, or other such things, they should get the issues resolved so they can move on with Jesus.

3. This chapter is also important because it shows us how we should think of the Old Testament institutions of the priesthood and the Law.

B. Melchizedek and his relation to the Aaronic priesthood.

1. (Heb 7:1-3) What we know of Melchizedek from Gen 14:18-20.

For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually.

a. **Who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings:** After Abraham defeated the confederation of kings who took his nephew Lot captive, he met with a mysterious **priest** named **Melchizedek**, who was also **king** over the city **of Salem** (an ancient name for the city of *Jerusalem*).

i. History shows the danger of combining religious and civic authority. Therefore God forbade the kings of Israel to be priests and the priests to be kings. **Melchizedek**, who was **king of Salem** and **priest of the Most High God** is an unique exception.

b. **Priest of the Most High God:** Melchizedek was not merely a worshipper of the true God. He had the honored title **priest of the Most High God**. The greatness of God magnifies the greatness of Melchizedek’s priesthood.

i. “Any priesthood is evaluated according to the status of the deity who is served, which means that Melchizedek’s must have been of a highly exalted kind.” (Guthrie)

c. **And blessed him:** Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and Abraham gave Melchizedek a tithe, which is **a tenth part of all**. In this case, **all** refers either to **all** the spoils of battle, or **all** of Abraham’s possessions in total.

d. **First being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,”** : The name **Melchizedek** means **“king of righteousness,”** and he was also **king of peace** (because the name **Salem** means **“peace”**).

i. The order is subtle, but important. First, Melchizedek in his very name is called **“king of righteousness”** .

*Then* he is called **“king of peace”** . As always, **righteousness** comes before **peace**. Righteousness is the only true path to peace. People look for that peace in *escape*, in *evasion*, or in *compromise*; but they will only find it in righteousness.

e. **Without father, without mother:** There is nothing said about the genealogy of Melchizedek in the Genesis 14 passage or anywhere else. As far as the Biblical record is concerned, he has no **father** or **mother**, no **beginning of days nor end of life**.

i. Though virtually all the commentators disagree with each other on this point, some think that **without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God** means that Melchizedek was a heavenly being, if not a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus Himself.

f. **Made like the Son of God:** Melchizedek was **made like the Son of God**. It really isn’t that Jesus has Melchizedek’s kind of priesthood. Instead, Melchizedek has Jesus’ kind of priesthood.

i. **Made like** in Heb\_7:3 is *aphomoiomenos*, a Greek word used nowhere else in the New Testament. “It is a suggestive

word, used in the active of 'a facsimile copy or model' and in the passive of 'being made similar to.'"

(Guthrie)

ii. "It was as if the Father could not await the day of His Son's priestly entrance within the veil; but must needs anticipate the marvels of His ministry, by embodying its leading features in miniature." (Meyer)

g. **Remains a priest continually:** Either this refers to the continuation of the priesthood of Melchizedek, or it is evidence that Melchizedek was actually Jesus appearing in the Old Testament. Jesus' priesthood does remain to this day, and into eternity.

2. (Heb\_7:4-10) Melchizedek is greater than Abraham because Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, and because Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

Now consider how great this man *was*, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils. And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he *receives them*, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him.

a. **Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils . . . the sons of Levi . . . have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law:** The priesthood of Levi received tithes from Israel as a **commandment**. Abraham *voluntarily* gave tithes to Melchizedek. This makes Abraham's *giving* to Melchizedek greater than Israel *payment* of tithes to the priesthood instituted by Moses.

b. **Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him:** Because the whole tribe of Levi was genetically **in the loins of** Abraham when he did this, we see the Levitical priesthood paying tithes to the priesthood of Melchizedek. This shows Melchizedek is in a position of authority over Abraham and his descendant Levi.

i. **So to speak** in Heb\_7:9 is important. The writer to the Hebrews knows he is making an allegorical point, so he doesn't want to be taken too literally.

c. As well, the **lesser is blessed by the greater**. Therefore Melchizedek showed he was **greater** than Abraham when he **blessed** Abraham. On his part, Abraham accepted that Melchizedek was **greater** when he received the blessing.

i. "The blessing here spoken of . . . is not the simple *wishing of good* to others, which may be done by inferiors to superiors; but it is the action of a person *authorized* to declare *God's intention* to bestow good things on another." (Macknight, cited by Clarke)

C. The need for a new priesthood.

1. (Heb\_7:11) The Levitical priesthood never made anything perfect.

Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need *was there* that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?

a. **If perfection were through the Levitical priesthood:** Why would God even make a different order of priesthood (displayed by Melchizedek) if the Levitical priesthood were entirely sufficient? If **perfection** could come **through the Levitical priesthood**, what need was there for another priesthood?



i. The simple fact that God describes a **priest . . . according to the order of Melchizedek** shows there is something lacking in the priesthood **according to the order of Aaron**.

b. **Under it the people received the law:** The Levitical priesthood is the priesthood associated with the Law of Moses.

The priesthood of Melchizedek is associated with Abraham, not with Moses.

2. (Heb\_7:12) The changing priesthood and the change of the place of Moses' Law.

For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.

a. **Of necessity:** The priesthood of Aaron was connected to the Law of Moses. So if the priesthood is changed, we should anticipate some change of the Law's status or place.

3. (Heb\_7:13-14) Jesus could not be a priest according to the Mosaic Law; He is from the wrong tribe.

For He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For *it is* evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.

a. **Another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar:** Under the Law of Moses, God strictly commanded that only those from the family of Aaron could serve **at the altar** in sacrifice.

b. **He of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe:** Jesus is obviously not from the family of Aaron or even the tribe of Levi. The tribe of **Judah** (the tribe of Jesus' lineage) had nothing to do with Aaron's priesthood, the priesthood associated with the Law of Moses. Therefore according to the priesthood of Aaron and the Law of Moses, Jesus could never be a priest. If He is our High Priest, it must be under another principle.

4. (Heb\_7:15-17) God's declaration that the Messiah belongs to another order of priesthood in Psa\_110:4.

And it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek, there arises another priest who has come, not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life. For He testifies: "You *are* a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."

a. **Not according to the law of a fleshly commandment:** Jesus' priesthood is not based upon law or heredity (**a fleshly commandment**), but upon the power of God's **endless life**.

b. **You are a priest forever.** This could be said of the Messiah, who was a priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

It could never be said of a priest according to the order of Aaron, none of whom had **the power of an endless life** and each of whom served a limited term as priests - limited to their own life-span.

c. Mat\_27:1 says: *When morning came, all the chief priests and elders of the people plotted against Jesus to put Him to death.* Among those who conspired to put Jesus to death, there were priests of the order of Aaron. But Jesus by the **power of an endless life**, Jesus showed that His priesthood was superior, when He triumphed over death!

5. (Heb\_7:18-19) Why the law (**the former commandment**) is annulled as a means of establishing our relationship and access to God.

For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, *there is the* bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

a. In its **weakness** and **unprofitableness**, the law **made nothing perfect**, for while the law sets God's perfect standard, it gives no one the power to keep that standard.

i. \*"Let all legalists mark this: **The Law made nothing perfect**. Let the Seventh Day Adventists mark: **The Law**

**made nothing perfect.** Let all those who dream of the Law as a rule of life remember: **The Law made nothing perfect.**" (Newell)

b. **The law made nothing perfect:** Therefore, the law is valuable as it shows us God's perfect standard, but it was not ultimately intended to be the basis of a man's walk with God. This is because the law is *weak* and *unprofitable* when it comes to saving my soul or giving me power over sin.

i. The law provides expert diagnosis of our sin problem, which is absolutely essential. But the law does not provide the cure to our sin problem. Only Jesus can save us from our sin problem.

c. **On the other hand:** Since now, in Jesus, we have a **better hope, through which we draw near to God**, we are wrong to go back to building our Christian walk on the law. Therefore the law is "annulled" in the sense that it no longer is the dominating principle of our life.

i. "The Greek word translated disannulling [**annulling**], *athetesis*, is the same as appears in Heb\_9:26 for the *putting away of sin* 'by the sacrifice of Himself.' *The disappearance of the Law is as absolute, therefore, as the putting away of sin!*" (Newell)

ii. The law does not give you a **better hope**. The law does not **draw** you **near** to God the way God's grace given in Jesus does. Yet many Christians live a legal relationship with God, instead of a grace relationship with Him!

iii. "Although the law performed a valuable function, its essential *weakness* was that it could not give life and vitality even to those who kept it, let alone to those who did not. In fact its function was not to provide strength, but to provide a standard by which man could measure his own moral status. Its *uselessness* must not be regarded in the sense of being totally worthless, but in the sense of being ineffective in providing a constant means of approach to God based on a totally adequate sacrifice." (Guthrie)

d. The writer comes to the same conclusion about the law as Paul did in Gal\_3:19-25, but he gets there in a totally different way. In Galatians, Paul shows the law as being a tutor that brings us to Jesus; in Hebrews, the law is associated with a priesthood which has been made obsolete by a superior priesthood.

i. "Cease to think of cleansing, and consider the Cleanser; forbear to speculate on deliverance, and deal with the Deliverer." (Meyer)

e. But we have a **better hope**, and **draw near to God** through a better priesthood and High Priest. Our hope is in Jesus, not in the Law of Moses!

i. This should temper our excitement about the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. The small cadre of dedicated Jews absolutely committed to rebuilding the temple have an exciting place in God's prophetic plan. But anyone who restores the Aaronic priesthood and resumes Levitical sacrifice refuses to recognize the superior priesthood and ultimate sacrifice of Jesus.

D. The superiority of our High Priest.

1. (Heb\_7:20-21) Jesus was made High Priest by the direct oath of God.

And inasmuch as *He was not made priest* without an oath (for they have become priests without an oath, but He with an oath by Him who said to Him: "The LORD has sworn and will not relent, 'You *are* a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek'"),

a. **They have become priests without an oath:** The high priest of the order of Aaron was appointed by heredity, not by personal character. Not so with Jesus and the priestly **order of Melchizedek!** God even sealed His choice by an **oath**.

2. (Heb\_7:22) Jesus: our guarantee of a better covenant.

By so much more Jesus has become a surety of a better covenant.

a. **Jesus has become a surety: Surety** (the ancient Greek word *egguos*) describes someone who gives security. It is a person who would cosign a loan to guarantee payment, or someone who puts up bail for a prisoner. **Jesus Himself** is the guaranteed of **a better covenant**.

b. **A better covenant**: The Old Covenant had a mediator (Moses), but no one to guarantee the people's side of the covenant; so they continually failed under it. But the New Covenant - **a better covenant** - has a cosigner on our behalf!

Therefore, the New Covenant depends on what Jesus has done, not on what we have done. *He* is the **surety**, *we* are not.

c. **Covenant**: The word used for **covenant** (the ancient Greek word *diatheke*) is not the usual term for "covenant" (*syntheke*). The literal meaning of *diatheke* is closer to the idea of a "testament" in the sense of a "last will and testament."

Perhaps the writer is trying to stress that while a covenant might be thought of as an agreement that two equal parties arrive at, a testament is dictated by the testator. The "agreement" under which we meet with God through Jesus is not something we have *negotiated* with Him. He has *dictated* the terms to us, and we will accept or reject the terms.

d. **By so much more**: This **much more** - the overwhelming superiority of Jesus Christ - proves He is worthy and able to be our guarantee, our cosigner of **a better covenant**.

3. (Heb\_7:23-25) An unchanging priesthood means a lasting salvation.

Also there were many priests, because they were prevented by death from continuing. But He, because He continues forever, has an unchangeable priesthood. Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them.

a. **Also there were many priests:** The priesthood under the Law of Moses constantly changed, and so could be better or worse through the years. **But He . . . has an unchangeable priesthood.** Jesus will never die, and has a *permanent* priesthood. We don't need to worry about a "bad priest" replacing Him!

b. **Continues forever:** This has the idea of "remaining as a servant." Jesus **continues forever**, and He **continues** as a servant, even after He ascended into heaven.

c. **He is also able to save to the uttermost:** The unchanging nature of Jesus' priesthood means that the salvation He gives is also unchanging, permanent, and secure. Most people read this verse as if it said Jesus is **able to save** *from* **the uttermost**. But it really says Jesus is **able to save to the uttermost**. Because He is our High Priest **forever**, He can save *forever*.

i. The evangelist Billy Sunday had a great sermon, where he talked about how God saved him "from the gutter-most," because he was a gutter-drunk when God saved him. A great line, but not true to what the Bible says - we are saved not *from*, but *to* the uttermost!

ii. "The verb 'to save' is used absolutely, which means that Christ will save in the most comprehensive sense; he saves from all that humanity needs saving from." (Morris)

d. **Those who come to God through Him:** This tells us *who* Jesus is able to save. It means those who abide in the Son and have fellowship with the Father.

i. Once saved always saved? Can a Christian lose his salvation? Abide in Jesus and you never need to worry about it.

e. **He ever lives to make intercession for them:** Certainly, this strengthens us - the knowledge that Jesus is praying for us, and that **He ever lives to** pray for us! How this would have encouraged these Jewish Christians who felt like giving up on the Christian life!

i. Rom\_8:33-34 reflects how important Paul thought the intercessory work of Jesus was on our behalf. There, he pictures Jesus defending us against every charge or condemnation through His intercession for us.

ii. "Our blessed Lord is interceding for us, but He is in no sense appeasing God. All that God's holy Being and righteous government could demand was once for all, completely and forever, satisfied at the Cross." (Newell)

iii. Jesus' intercession on our behalf is not a matter of placating an angry Father who wants to destroy us. It is not a matter of continually chanting prayers on behalf of His people. It means He continually represents us before the Father, so that we can draw near through Him, and that He defends us against Satanic accusation and attack.

iv. Luk\_22:31-32 gives an example of Jesus' intercession for His people: *Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.* Jesus prays to strengthen us in trial and attack, and against Satan's accusations.

4. (Heb\_7:26-28) Jesus is better qualified to be a High Priest than any priest from the order of the Law of Moses.

For such a High Priest was fitting for us, *who is* holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself. For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, *appoints* the Son who has been perfected forever.

a. **For such a High Priest was fitting for us:** The priests under the Law of Moses did not have the personal character of the Son of God. Jesus is **holy, harmless** (without guile or deception), **undefiled, separate from sinners** (in the

sense of sharing in their sin). Jesus is far superior in His personal character than any earthly priest.

b. **Has become higher than the heavens:** The perfect character of Jesus is proven by two facts. First, by His exaltation in heaven. Second, by the fact that He did not need to **offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins** - which the other priests needed to do **daily!**

c. **For the law appoints as high priests men who have weaknesses:** Under the Law of Moses, the priests were always men with **weaknesses**. But Jesus a **Son who has been perfected forever**. Because He is a perfect High Priest, He was able to **offer up Himself** as a perfect sacrifice for our sin. Jesus is *perfectly* qualified to be our *perfect* High Priest - **perfected forever!**

(Heb 7:2) To him<sup>2</sup> also ***Abraham apportioned a tithe 3 of everything***.<sup>4</sup> His name first means<sup>5</sup> king of righteousness, then ***king***

***of Salem***, that is, king of peace.

(Heb 7:3) Without father, without mother, without genealogy, he has neither beginning of days nor end of life but is like the son of God, and he remains a priest for all time.

(Heb 7:4) But see how great he must be, if<sup>6</sup> Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe<sup>7</sup> of his plunder.

(Heb 7:5) And those of the sons of Levi who receive the priestly office<sup>8</sup> have authorization according to the law to collect a tithe from the people, that is, from their fellow countrymen,<sup>9</sup> although they too are descendants of Abraham.<sup>10</sup>

(Heb 7:6) But Melchizedek<sup>11</sup> who does not share their ancestry<sup>12</sup> collected a tithe<sup>13</sup> from Abraham and blessed<sup>14</sup> the one who possessed the promise.

(Heb 7:7) Now without dispute the inferior is blessed by the superior,

(Heb 7:8) and in one case tithes are received by mortal men, while in the other by him who is affirmed to be alive.



(Heb 7:9) And it could be said that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid a tithe through Abraham.

(Heb 7:10) For he was still in his ancestor Abraham's loins<sup>15</sup> when Melchizedek met him.

(Heb 7:11) ***Jesus and the Priesthood of Melchizedek***

So if perfection had in fact been possible through the Levitical priesthood — for on that basis<sup>16</sup> the people received the law — what further need would there have been for another priest to arise, said to be in the order of Melchizedek and not in Aaron's order?

(Heb 7:12) For when the priesthood changes, a change in the law must come<sup>17</sup> as well.

(Heb 7:13) Yet the one these things are spoken about belongs to<sup>18</sup> a different tribe, and no one from that tribe<sup>19</sup> has ever officiated at the altar.

(Heb 7:14) For it is clear that our Lord is descended from Judah, yet Moses said nothing about priests in connection with that tribe.

(Heb 7:15) And this is even clearer if another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek,

(Heb 7:16) who has become a priest not by a legal regulation about physical descent<sup>20</sup> but by the power of an indestructible life.

(Heb 7:17) For here is the testimony about him:<sup>21</sup> " ***You are a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.***"<sup>22</sup>

(Heb 7:18) On the one hand a former command is set aside<sup>23</sup> because it is weak and useless,<sup>24</sup>

(Heb 7:19) for the law made nothing perfect. On the other hand a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

(Heb 7:20) And since<sup>25</sup> this was not done without a sworn affirmation — for the others have become priests without a sworn affirmation,

(Heb 7:21) but Jesus<sup>26</sup> did so<sup>27</sup> with a sworn affirmation by the one who said to him, " ***The Lord has sworn and will***

***not change***

***his mind, 'You are a priest forever' "28 —***

(Heb 7:22) accordingly Jesus has become the guarantee<sup>29</sup> of a better covenant.

(Heb 7:23) And the others<sup>30</sup> who became priests were numerous, because death prevented them<sup>31</sup> from continuing in office,<sup>32</sup>

(Heb 7:24) but he holds his priesthood permanently since he lives forever.

(Heb 7:25) So he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them.

(Heb 7:26) For it is indeed fitting for us to have such a high priest: holy, innocent, undefiled, separate from sinners, and exalted above the heavens.

(Heb 7:27) He has no need to do every day what those priests do, to offer sacrifices first for their own sins and then for the sins of the people, since he did this in offering himself once for all.

(Heb 7:28) For the law appoints as high priests men subject to weakness,<sup>33</sup> but the word of solemn affirmation that came after the law appoints a son made perfect forever.

(Heb 8:1) ***The High Priest of a Better Covenant***

Now the main point of what we are saying is this:<sup>1</sup> We have such a high priest, one who *sat down at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven,*<sup>2</sup>

(Guzik)

**Heb 8:1-13**

***Hebrews 8 - A NEW, BETTER COVENANT***

A. Jesus, our heavenly priest.

1. (Heb\_8:1-2) A summary of points previously made regarding Jesus as our High Priest.

Now *this is* the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the

sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.

a. **This is the main point of the things we are saying:** We have a **High Priest** - Jesus Christ - who ministers for us from a position of all authority in heaven (**seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty**).

b. **Who is seated at the right hand of the throne:** Additionally, Jesus is **seated** in heaven, in contrast to the continual service of the priesthood under the Law of Moses.

i. The tabernacle and the temple of the Old Covenant had beautiful furnishings, but no place for the priests to *sit down*, because their work was never finished. The work of Jesus is finished - He **is seated** in heaven!

c. Jesus serves in the **true tabernacle which the Lord erected**, the **original** made by God, of which the earthly tabernacle was a *copy*, made by man (Exo\_25:8-9).

i. Some have supposed the **true tabernacle** to be the Church, or Jesus' earthly body. But it is best to understand it as the heavenly reality that the earthly tabernacle imitated.

2. (Heb\_8:3) Jesus' priesthood had a sacrifice - and a better sacrifice.

For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore *it is* necessary that this One also have something to offer.

a. **Every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices:** Sacrifice for sin is essential to the concept of priesthood. Jesus, representing a superior priesthood, offered a superior sacrifice. He laid down His own life to atone for sin.

b. **It is necessary that this One also have something to offer:** Though Jesus never offered a sacrifice according to the Law of Moses, He offered a better sacrifice instead - Himself.

3. (Heb\_8:4-5) Jesus' priesthood had a temple - and a better temple.

For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, “See *that* you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain.”

a. **If He were on earth, He would not be a priest:** Jesus is not qualified to serve in the inferior earthly priesthood.

**There are priests** - plenty of them - who were qualified to serve in the priesthood according to the Law of Moses.

b. **Who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things:** There were plenty of priests who could serve in **the copy and shadow** on earth. But Jesus is the only One qualified to serve in the superior heavenly priesthood. The earthly service, though it was glorious in the eyes of man, was really only a **copy and shadow** of the superior heavenly service.

c. **Copy and shadow of the heavenly things:** Exo\_25:40 makes it clear that what was built on the earth (Moses’ tabernacle) was made according to a *pattern* which existed in heaven - the *pattern which was shown to you* [Moses] *on the mountain*. Therefore, there is a **heavenly** temple that served as a pattern for the earthly tabernacle and temple. Jesus’ ministry as our High Priest takes place in this **heavenly** temple, not in **the copy and shadow**.

i. First century Jews took tremendous pride in the temple, and for good reason: it was a spectacular architectural achievement. However glorious the Jerusalem temple was, it was of man (and mostly built by a corrupt, ungodly man, Herod the Great), and it was nothing compared to the glory of the heavenly temple that Jesus served in.

4. (Heb\_8:6) The result: Jesus presides over a superior priesthood, with a better covenant, and better promises.

But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.

a. Jesus has **obtained a more excellent ministry**: No earthly priest could take away sin the way Jesus did, so Jesus'

ministry is far better than the ministry of the priesthood under the Law of Moses.

b. **Mediator of a better covenant**: Jesus has mediated for us a **better covenant**, a covenant of grace, not works, which is guaranteed for us by a cosigner (Heb\_7:22). It is a **covenant** marked by believing and receiving instead of by earning and deserving.

c. **Which was established on better promises**: Jesus has for us **better promises**. **Promises** to see us through the most desperate and dark times. **Promises** that become alive to us through the Spirit of God. **Promises** of blessing and undeserved favor instead of promises of cursing.

d. Jesus is our **Mediator** for this greater covenant. **Mediator** is the ancient Greek word *mesites*, which means "one who stands in the middle between two people and brings them together." (Barclay) i. Moses was the mediator of the Old Covenant, because he "brought the two parties together." Jesus is the

**Mediator** of the New Covenant, **a better covenant**, bringing us to God the Father.

5. An overview of covenants through God's redemptive history.

a. There is an *eternal covenant* between the members of the Godhead that made possible the salvation of man (Heb\_13:20).

b. God's redemptive plan was continued through the covenant He made with *Abraham* (Gen\_12:1-3).

c. The *Mosaic covenant* was another step in God's redemptive plan (Exo\_24:3-8).

d. The *Davidic covenant* was yet another step in God's redemptive plan (2Sa\_7:1-16).

e. But the redemptive plan of God was fulfilled in the *New Covenant* (Luk\_22:14-20).

## B. The superiority of the New Covenant.

1. (Heb\_8:7) The mere fact that God mentions another covenant is proves that there is something lacking in the Old Covenant.

For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.

a. It's in the nature of man to come up with things that are "new" but not needed. God isn't like that. **If the first covenant had been faultless**, there would have been not need **for a second** covenant. If God established a New Covenant, it means that there is something lacking in the Old Covenant.

2. (Heb\_8:8-12) The New Covenant as it is presented in the Old Testament (quoting from Jer\_31:31-34).

Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. For this *is* the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them.

For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more."

a. **Finding fault:** In this passage from Jeremiah 31, God shows that there must have been something lacking in the Old Covenant - because a New Covenant is promises. In the days of Jeremiah, that New Covenant was still in the future, because he says **"Behold the days are coming."**

i. In its context, Jeremiah's prophecy probably comes from the days of Josiah's renewal of the covenant after finding the law (2Ki\_23:3). This renewal was good, but it wasn't enough, because Jeremiah looks forward to **a new covenant**.

b. **I will make**: The Lord makes it plain that this covenant originates with God, not with man. At Sinai, under the Old Covenant, the words were *if you* (Exo\_19:5), but in the New Covenant, the words are **I will**.

c. **A new covenant**: This covenant is truly **new**, not merely "new and improved" in the way things are marketed to us today. Today, products are said to be "new and improved" when there is no substantial difference in the product. But when God says "**new**," He means **new**.

i. There are two Greek words that can describe the concept of "new." *Neos* describes newness as regards to *time*.

Something can be a copy of something else, but if it recently made, it can be called *neos*. The ancient Greek word *kainos* (the word used here) describes something that is not only **new** in reference to time, but is truly **new** in its quality. It simply isn't a new reproduction of something old.

d. **With the house of Israel and the house of Judah**: The New Covenant definitely began with Israel, but did not end with Israel (Mat\_15:24 and Act\_1:8).

e. **Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers**: This covenant is *not like* the **covenant** God made with **their fathers**. Again, this emphasizes that there is something substantially *different* about the New Covenant.

f. **Because they did not continue in My covenant**: The weakness of the Old Covenant was not in the Covenant itself.

It was in the weakness and inability of man. The reason the Old Covenant didn't "work" was **because they did not continue in My covenant**.

g. **I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts:** The New Covenant features transformation from within, not regulation through external law.

h. **I will be their God, and they shall be My people:** The New Covenant also features a greater intimacy with God than what was available under the Old Covenant.

i. **Their sins and lawless deeds I will remember no more:** The New Covenant offers a true, complete cleansing from sin, different and better than the mere “covering over” of sin in the Old Covenant.

3. (Heb\_8:13) The significance of a *New Covenant*.

In that He says, “A new *covenant*,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

a. **He has made the first obsolete:** Now that the New Covenant has been inaugurated, the Old Covenant is thereby **obsolete**.

b. **What is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away:** The message to these discouraged Jewish Christians, who thought of going back to a more Jewish faith, is clear. They simply *can't* go back to an inferior covenant, which is ready to completely **vanish away**.

i. The system of sacrifice under the Law of Moses soon did **vanish away** with the coming destruction of the Temple and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

### ***Differences Between the New Covenant and the Old Covenant***

1. They were instituted at different times. The Old Covenant around 1446 B.C., the New Covenant around 33 A.D.

2. They were instituted at different places. The Old Covenant at Mount Sinai, the New Covenant at Mount Zion.

3. They were spoken in different ways. The Old Covenant was thundered with fear and dread at Mount Sinai (Exo\_19:17-24). Jesus Christ, God the Son, declared the New Covenant with love and grace.



4. They are different in their mediators. Moses mediated the Old Covenant. Jesus is the mediator of the New Covenant.
5. They are different in their subject matter. The Old Covenant *demand*ed a covenant of works. The New Covenant *fulfills* the covenant of works through the completed work of Jesus.
6. They are different in how they were dedicated. The Old Covenant was dedicated with the blood of animals sprinkled on the people (Exo\_24:5-8). The New Covenant was dedicated with Jesus' blood spiritually applied to His people.
7. They are different in their priests. The Old Covenant is represented by the priesthood of the Law of Moses and high priests descended from Aaron. The New Covenant has a priesthood of all believers and a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.
8. They are different in their sacrifices. The Old Covenant demanded endless repetition of imperfect sacrifices. The New Covenant provides a once and for all, perfect sacrifice of the Son of God Himself.
9. They are different in how and where they were written. The Old Covenant was written by God on tablets of stone. The New Covenant is written by God on the hearts of His people.
10. They are different in their goals. The goal of the Old Covenant was to discover sin, to condemn it, and to set a "fence" around it. The goal of the New Covenant is to declare the love, grace, and mercy of God, and to give repentance, remission of sin, and eternal life.
11. They are different in their practical effect on living. The Old Covenant ends in bondage (through no fault of its own). The New Covenant provides true liberty.
12. They are different in their giving of the Holy Spirit. Under the Old Covenant, God did grant the Holy Spirit, but not in the same way and extent that He is given to believer under the New Covenant.

13. They are different in their idea of the Kingdom of God. Under the Old Covenant, it is mainly seen as the supreme rule of Israel over the nations. Under the New Covenant, it is both a present spiritual reality and a coming literal fact.

14. They are different in their substance. The Old Covenant has vivid shadows. The New Covenant has the reality.

15. They are different in the extent of their administration. The Old Covenant was confined to the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob according to the flesh. The New Covenant is extended to all nations and races under heaven.

16. They are different in what they actually accomplish. The Old Covenant made nothing perfect. The New Covenant can and will bring in the perfection of God's people.

17. They are different in their duration. The Old Covenant was designed to be removed. The New Covenant was designed to last forever.

*"Let us observe from these things, that the state of the gospel, or of the Church under the New Testament, being accompanied by the highest privileges and advantages that it is capable of in this world, there is a great obligation on all believers unto holiness and fruitfulness in obedience, unto the glory of God; and the heinousness of their sin, by whom this covenant is neglected or despised, is abundantly manifested."* (John Owen) (Heb 8:2) a minister in the sanctuary and the true tabernacle that the Lord, not man, set up.

(Heb 8:3) For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. So this one too had to have something to offer.

(Heb 8:4) Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, since there are already priests who offer<sup>3</sup> the gifts prescribed by the law.

(Heb 8:5) The place where they serve is<sup>4</sup> a sketch<sup>5</sup> and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary, just as Moses was warned by God as he was about to complete the tabernacle. For he

says, " ***See that you make everything according to the design 6 shown to you on the mountain.***"<sup>7</sup>

(Heb 8:6) But<sup>8</sup> now Jesus<sup>9</sup> has obtained a superior ministry, since<sup>10</sup> the covenant that he mediates is also better and is enacted<sup>11</sup> on better promises.<sup>12</sup>

(Heb 8:7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, no one would have looked for a second one.<sup>13</sup>

(Heb 8:8) But<sup>14</sup> showing its fault,<sup>15</sup> God<sup>16</sup> says to them,<sup>17</sup>

***" Look, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel and***

## with the house of Judah.

(Heb 8:9) " ***It will not be like the covenant<sup>18</sup> that I made with their fathers, on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they did not continue in my covenant and I had no regard for them, says the Lord.***

(Heb 8:10) " ***For this is the covenant that I will establish with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord. I will put<sup>19</sup> my laws in their minds<sup>20</sup> and I will inscribe them on their hearts. And I will be their God and they will be my people.***<sup>21</sup>

(Heb 8:11) " ***And there will be no need at all<sup>22</sup> for each one to teach his countryman or each one to teach his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' since they will all know me, from the least to the greatest.***<sup>23</sup>

(Heb 8:12) " ***For I will be merciful toward their evil deeds, and their sins I will remember no longer.***"<sup>24</sup>

(Heb 8:13) When he speaks of a new covenant,<sup>25</sup> he makes the first obsolete. Now what is growing obsolete and aging is about to disappear.<sup>26</sup>

(Heb 9:1) ***The Arrangement and Ritual of the Earthly Sanctuary***

Now the first covenant,<sup>1</sup> in fact, had regulations for worship and its earthly sanctuary.

(Guzik)

**Heb 9:1-28**

## **Hebrews 9 - THE OLD COVENANT AND THE NEW COVENANT COMPARED**

A. Features of the Old Covenant described.

1. (Heb\_9:1-5) The Old Covenant's tabernacle and its furnishings.

Then indeed, even the first *covenant* had ordinances of divine service and the earthly sanctuary. For a tabernacle was prepared: the first *part*, in which *was* the lampstand, the table, and the showbread, which is called the sanctuary; and behind the second veil, the part of the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of All, which had the golden censer and the ark of the covenant overlaid on all sides with gold, in which *were* the golden pot that had the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tablets of the covenant; and above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

a. **The earthly sanctuary:** The tabernacle ordained by the Old Covenant was planned by God, but planned for an **earthly** service.

b. **For a tabernacle was prepared:** The **tabernacle** was a tent 45 feet long, 15 feet wide, and 15 feet high, divided into two rooms. The larger room (**the first part**) was a 15 foot by 30 foot "holy place." **Behind the second veil** was the smaller room was a 15 foot by 15 foot, called **the Holiest of All**.

c. The **lampstand** with a middle stem and six branches stood in **the first part** and was of an unspecified size, made of pure gold; it provided the only *light* for the tabernacle (Exo\_25:31-40).

d. The **table** sat in **the first part** and was made of acacia wood covered with gold, 3 feet long, 1½ feet wide, and 2 feet 3

inches high. It held twelve loaves of **showbread**, each representing God's fellowship with the twelve tribes of Israel (Exo\_25:23-30).

e. The **sanctuary** refers to **the first part**, known as the “holy place.” A **veil** (a thick curtain) separated **the first part** from the **Holiest of All**, also known as the “holy of holies” (Exo\_26:31-33).

f. The **golden altar of incense** was made of acacia wood covered with gold, 1½ feet square, and 3 feet high. It stood at the veil before the “holy of holies,” and was used to burn incense (Exo\_30:1-8).

g. The **ark of the covenant** stood inside the **Holiest of All**, and was a chest made of acacia wood covered with gold, 3¾

feet long, 2¼ feet wide, and 2¼ feet high, with rings for polls along it’s side by which it would be carried (Exo\_25:10-22).

i. Inside the ark was **the golden pot that had the manna** (Exo\_16:33), **Aaron’s rod that budded** (Num\_17:6-11), and **the tablets of the covenant** (Exo\_25:16).

ii. The manna reminded Israel of God’s provision and their ungratefulness. Aaron’s rod reminded them of their rebellion against God’s authority. The tablets of the covenant reminded them of their failure to keep the Ten Commandments and rest of the law.

h. The **mercy seat** was the ornate “lid” for the ark of the covenant, made with the designs of cherubim upon it; the blood of sacrifice was sprinkled upon it for the forgiveness of Israel’s sin on the Day of Atonement (Exo\_25:17-22).

i. As God looked down into the ark, He saw the symbols of Israel’s sin, rebellion and failure. But when the blood of sacrifice was applied to the mercy seat, His sight of the sin of Israel was covered by the blood of sacrifice.

2. (Heb\_9:6-7) Priestly service in the tabernacle under the Old Covenant.

Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing *the services*. But into the second part the high priest *went* alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for

himself and *for* the people's sins *committed* in ignorance; a. **The priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services:** The **priests**, as appointed, went daily into the "holy place" to perform priestly functions such as tending the lampstand and replacing the showbread.

b. **But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year:** The "holy of holies" was entered only **once a year** by the high priest **alone**, on the Day of Atonement.

c. **The high priest went alone once a year, not without blood:** His entrance into the **second part** was not for fellowship, but only for atonement, first for his own sin, then for the sins of his people.

i. Access into the *Holiest of All* was thus severely restricted, and even when someone could enter, it wasn't for real fellowship with God.

ii. The ancient Jewish Rabbis wrote of how the high priest would not prolong his prayer in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, because it might make the people think he had been killed. When he came out, he threw a party for all his friends, because he had emerged safely from the presence of God.

d. **The people's sins committed in ignorance:** Sins of **ignorance** were the specific aim of the Day of Atonement. It was assumed that *known* sin would be taken care of through the regular sin offerings and the daily sacrifices.

i. In this respect, Jesus' work is far greater than the work done on the Day of Atonement. Jesus' work on the cross is sufficient to atone for both the sins we do in ignorance and sins that we know.

3. (Heb\_9:8-10) The Holy Spirit gives understanding regarding the priestly service under the Old Covenant.

The Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. It *was* symbolic for the present time in

which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience; *concerned* only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.

a. **The way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing:** The old had to pass away before God's new way could be revealed.

b. **It was symbolic for the present time:** **Symbolic** is the ancient Greek word *parabole*. The tabernacle itself and all that the Old Covenant represented were suggestive of deeper truths, *parables* of the New Covenant.

c. **Cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience:** The priestly service performed now (current at the writer's time) does not make even the priests offering those sacrifices perfect and clean in **regard to the conscience**.

i. If the cleansing is incomplete for the priest, how much more for the person the priest worked on behalf of!

c. **Fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation:** The weakness of the priestly service under the Old Covenant was its inability to address the need for inner transformation in man; therefore it was only **imposed until the time of reformation**.

B. Features of the New Covenant described.

1. (Heb\_9:11) The superior sanctuary of the New Covenant. But Christ came *as* High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation.

a. **The greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands:** Jesus, as our High Priest, ministers in a superior sanctuary - the very throne room of God, a place greater than anything human **hands** could make.

2. (Heb\_9:12-15) The superior sacrifice of the New Covenant.



Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.

a. **The blood of goats and calves** was sufficient for a temporary covering of sin; but only a perfect sacrifice could obtain **eternal redemption**.

i. Jesus' sacrifice was superior in that it was *perfect, voluntary, rational, and motivated by love*.

b. **For if the blood of bulls and goats . . . sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ:** If these imperfect sacrifices were received as sufficient by Israel, how much more should they regard the ultimate sufficiency of the perfect sacrifice?

i. The **ashes of a heifer** refer to the remains of a burnt offering that was preserved, and sprinkled in the laver of washing to provide water suitable for ceremonial cleansing (Num\_19:1-10).

ii. This was a shadow, fulfilled and done away with when Jesus offered a perfect cleansing; there is no value in "holy water" used by the Roman Catholic Church.

iii. Reportedly, there is a search for a "red heifer" that can be sacrificed, and its ashes used as part or a restoration of priestly functions for a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem.

c. **How much more shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?** The sacrifice of Jesus is sufficient to even restore our damaged **conscience**.

i. Our **conscience** is a wonderful tool from God. But it isn't perfect. Our conscience can be *seared* (1Ti\_4:2). Our conscience can be *defiled* (Tit\_1:15). Our conscience can be *evil* (Heb\_10:22).

d. **Cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God: Dead works** probably has the thought of sin in general, in the sense of "works that bring death." But it must also speak to the vain continuation of Old Covenant sacrifice, which is certainly a **dead work** - and the very type of thing these discouraged Jewish Christians were tempted to go back to.

e. **He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death:** Jesus' work as a Mediator is fundamentally accomplished at His **death**. His heavenly work of mediation looks back to that perfect sacrifice.

f. **For the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant:** Jesus' payment on the cross accomplished **redemption** for those under the **first covenant**. Every sacrifice for sin made in faith under the Mosaic command was an IOU cashed in at the cross.

3. (Heb\_9:16-22) The necessity of Jesus' death.

For where there *is* a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament *is* in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first *covenant* was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This *is* the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

a. **For a testament is in force after men are dead: A testament** (in the sense of a "last will and testament") only

takes effect when the person making the testament dies. Therefore Jesus had to die for the testament - the covenant - to take effect.

b. Remember that the word that has been used for **covenant** is actually the word **testament**. The idea is essentially the same as a covenant, except that it is dictated by one party, not negotiated upon by two parties.

c. **Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood**: Clearly, death was necessary to the Old Covenant. Virtually every part of the sacrificial system under the Law of Moses was touched by **blood** in some way or another.

d. An important principle is stated: **Without shedding of blood there is no remission** [of sin].

i. Modern people think that sin is remitted (forgiven) by *time*, by *our good works*, by *our decent lives*, or by simply *death*.

ii. But there is **no** forgiveness without the shedding of blood, and there is no *perfect* forgiveness without a *perfect* sacrifice.

4. (Heb\_9:23-28) The perfect sanctuary receives a perfect sacrifice.

Therefore *it was* necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands, *which are* copies of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us; not that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood of another; He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world; but now, once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who

eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation.

a. **It was necessary that the copies of the things in the heavens should be purified with these:** It was acceptable for the **copies of the things in the heavens** in the earthly sanctuary to be “purified” with imperfect sacrifices. But the **heavenly things themselves** could only be **purified** with a perfect offering.

b. **For Christ has not entered the holy places made with hands . . . but into heaven itself:** Jesus’ sacrifice was made on earth, but it is the basis for His continuing work as our mediator and High Priest in heaven. The writer to the Hebrews proclaims it: **now to appear in the presence of God for us.** It’s not hard to believe that Jesus does **appear in the presence of God.** But to believe that He appears there **for us** is glorious!

c. **Not that He should offer Himself often:** Jesus’ ministry **for us** continues in heaven, *but not in the sense of continuing to atone for our sin.* His ministry continues **for us** in intercession and defending us against the accuser of God’s people (Rev\_12:10). But it does **not** continue in the sense that **He should offer Himself often.** His sacrifice was once-for-all, and perfectly satisfied God’s holy justice.

i. This passage and principle is a direct rebuke to the Roman Catholic *practice* and *theology* of the mass. In the mass, the Roman Catholic Church desires to *repeat* - not remember, but *repeat* - the atoning sacrifice of Jesus innumerable times. This is absolutely indefensible Scripturally, and *denies* the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Scriptures make it plain: **not that He should offer Himself often.**

d. **He then would have had to suffer often since the foundation of the world:** If the sacrifice of Jesus were not *perfect*, then it would have to be *continual* and *constant* - even **since the foundation of the world.** Imperfect sacrifices must be repeated continually but a perfect

sacrifice can be made once for all time, and genuinely **put away sin** (not just *cover* sin, as with sacrifice under the Old Covenant). The message is clear: **He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.**

i. This principle of sacrifice explains why the suffering of hell *must* be eternal for those who reject the atoning work of Jesus. They are in hell to pay the penalty of their sin, but as imperfect beings they are unable to make a perfect payment. If the payment is not perfect, then it has to be *continual* and *constant* - indeed, for all eternity. A soul could be released from hell the moment its debt of sin was completely paid - which is another way of saying *never*.

e. **And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment, so Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many:** Just as certainly as we **die once** and then face **judgment**, so Jesus only had to die **once** (not repeatedly, not continually) to **bear** our sins.

i. It is not the intention of the writer to the Hebrews to discuss the issue of reincarnation. That is a side issue; he simply brings up the obvious point, **it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.** Just as that is obvious, so it is plain that **Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many.** For the writer to the Hebrews, the truth that **it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment** is an indisputable principle.

ii. Though it was not really the point of the writer to the Hebrews to discuss reincarnation, he certainly and completely *denies* it here. We do not die and live and die and live and some number of lives down the road face an eternal reckoning. This life is it, and then we face judgment. This means that *there are no second chances beyond the grave.* Now is the time to choose for Jesus Christ, because when we **die**, it is simply **after this the judgment.**

iii. It is important to note that the principle of **it is appointed for men to die once** is not an *absolute principle*.

There are some unique, remarkable exceptions. Enoch (Gen\_5:24) and Elijah (2Ki\_2:11) never *died once*. Several people in the Bible were raised from the dead (1Ki\_17:22, 2Ki\_13:20-21, Mat\_9:25, Joh\_11:43-44, Act\_20:9-11), and therefore *died twice*. Those taken in the rapture (1Th\_4:17) will never *die once*. Yet these remarkable, unique exceptions do not deny the principle of **it is appointed for men to die once**; they are *exceptions that prove the rule*.

f. **He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation**: The focus of Jesus' first coming was to deal with the sin problem through His atoning sacrifice. But now, having dealt with the sin problem perfectly, He comes again **apart from sin** - for the **salvation** (in the sense of *rescue*) of His people.

i. **To those who eagerly wait for Him**: It is *assumed* that all believers will **eagerly wait for Him**. It's a sad case that this assumption doesn't always play out as true!

(Heb 9:2) For a tent was prepared, the outer one,<sup>2</sup> which contained<sup>3</sup> the lampstand, the table, and the presentation of the loaves; this<sup>4</sup> is called the holy place.

(Heb 9:3) And after the second curtain there was a tent called the holy of holies.

(Heb 9:4) It contained the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered entirely with gold. In this ark<sup>5</sup> were the golden urn containing the manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.

(Heb 9:5) And above the ark<sup>6</sup> were the cherubim<sup>7</sup> of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Now is not the time to speak of these things in detail.

(Heb 9:6) So with these things prepared like this, the priests enter continually into the outer tent<sup>8</sup> as they perform their duties.

(Heb 9:7) But only the high priest enters once a year into the inner tent,<sup>9</sup> and not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance.<sup>10</sup>

(Heb 9:8) The Holy Spirit is making clear that the way into the holy place had not yet appeared as long as the old tabernacle<sup>11</sup> was standing.

(Heb 9:9) This was a symbol for the time then present, when gifts and sacrifices were offered that could not perfect the conscience of the worshiper.

(Heb 9:10) They served only for matters of food and drink<sup>12</sup> and various washings; they are external regulations<sup>13</sup> imposed until the new order came.<sup>14</sup>

(Heb 9:11) ***Christ's Service in the Heavenly Sanctuary***

But now Christ has come<sup>15</sup> as the high priest of the good things to come. He passed through the greater and more perfect tent not made with hands, that is, not of this creation, (Heb 9:12) and he entered once for all into the most holy place not by the blood of goats and calves but by his own blood, and so he himself secured<sup>16</sup> eternal redemption.

(Heb 9:13) For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a young cow sprinkled on those who are defiled consecrated them and provided ritual purity,<sup>17</sup>

(Heb 9:14) how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our<sup>18</sup>

consciences from dead works to worship the living God.

(Heb 9:15) And so he is the mediator<sup>19</sup> of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the eternal inheritance he has promised,<sup>20</sup> since he died<sup>21</sup> to set them free from the violations committed under the first covenant.

(Heb 9:16) For where there is a will, the death of the one who made it must be proven.<sup>22</sup>

(Heb 9:17) For a will takes effect only at death, since it carries no force while the one who made it is alive.

(Heb 9:18) So even the first covenant was inaugurated with blood.<sup>23</sup>

(Heb 9:19) For when Moses had spoken every command to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats with water and scarlet wool and hyssop and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, (Heb 9:20) and said, " ***This is the blood of the covenant that God has commanded you to keep.***"<sup>24</sup>

(Heb 9:21) And both the tabernacle and all the utensils of worship he likewise sprinkled with blood.

(Heb 9:22) Indeed according to the law almost everything was purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.

(Heb 9:23) So it was necessary for the sketches<sup>25</sup> of the things in heaven to be purified with these sacrifices,<sup>26</sup> but the heavenly things themselves required<sup>27</sup> better sacrifices than these.

(Heb 9:24) For Christ did not enter a sanctuary made with hands — the representation<sup>28</sup> of the true sanctuary<sup>29</sup> — but into heaven itself, and he appears now in God's presence for us.

(Heb 9:25) And he did not enter to offer<sup>30</sup> himself again and again, the way the high priest enters the sanctuary year after year with blood that is not his own, (Heb 9:26) for then he would have had to suffer again and again since the foundation of the world. But now he has appeared once for all at the consummation of the ages to put away sin by his sacrifice.

(Heb 9:27) And just as people<sup>31</sup> are appointed to die once, and then to face judgment,<sup>32</sup>

(Heb 9:28) so also, after Christ was offered once to *bear the sins of many*,<sup>33</sup> to those who eagerly await him he will appear a second time, not to bear sin<sup>34</sup> but to bring salvation.<sup>35</sup>

(Heb 10:1) ***Concluding Exposition: Old and New Sacrifices Contrasted***



For the law possesses a shadow of the good things to come but not the reality itself, and is therefore completely unable, by the same sacrifices offered continually, year after year, to perfect those who come to worship.<sup>1</sup>

(Guzik)

### **Heb 10:1-39**

## **Hebrews 10 - HOLDING FAST WITH A PERFECT SACRIFICE**

A. The once for all sacrifice of Jesus.

1. (Heb\_10:1-4) Sacrifice under the Old Covenant could not truly take away sin.

For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those *sacrifices there is* a reminder of sins every year. For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.

a. **Having a shadow of the good things to come:** The idea that the Old Covenant (**the law**) is a mere **shadow** of the substance that is the New Covenant is also communicated in Col\_2:17 and Heb\_8:5. **Shadow** means that the law communicated the outline and the figure of the fulfillment in Jesus, but was **not the very image of the things**.

i. **Shadow** isn't a bad thing. Sometimes a **shadow** can tell you a lot. But the **shadow** is not the substance. The Old Covenant and its law were not themselves bad or evil, they are only *incomplete* and *insufficient* to bring total cleansing from sin, and to save. The **shadow . . . can never . . . make those who approach perfect**.

b. **Would they not have ceased to be offered?** The writer to the Hebrews repeats a familiar argument: the *repetition* of sacrifice shows its inherent *weakness*. If animal

sacrifice had “fixed” the sin problem, then they could **have ceased to be offered**.

i. **For the worshipers, once purified, would have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year:** Every repeated sacrifice was a **reminder of sins**. It brought the **consciousness of sins** to the people again and again. But the work of Jesus on the cross *takes away sin*!

c. **For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins:** Animal sacrifice under the Old Covenant could *cover* sin. The Hebrew word for *atonement* is *kophar*, which literally means “to cover.” But animal sacrifice could never **take away sins**. Only Jesus, the Perfect Sacrifice of the New Covenant, takes sins **away**.

2. (Heb\_10:5-10) A prophetic foundation for Jesus’ perfect sacrifice under the New Covenant.

Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: “Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. In burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin You had no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come; in the volume of the book it is written of Me; to do Your will, O God.’” Previously saying, “Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and *offerings* for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure *in them*” (which are offered according to the law), then He said, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.” He takes away the first that He may establish the second. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

a. **He said:** This quotation is taken from the Septuagint version of Psa\_40:6-8 (the Septuagint is the Greek translation of the Old Testament that was the most commonly used Bible in the first century). It shows that prophetically Jesus declared the insufficient character of Old Covenant sacrifice and declared His willingness to offer a perfect sacrifice under the New Covenant.

i. **Sacrifice and offering You did not desire:** More animal sacrifices, made under the law, would not please God.

ii. **But a body You have prepared for Me:** Instead, what pleased God could only come through Jesus, the incarnate Son of God.

iii. **Behold, I have come . . . to do Your will, O God:** Jesus' submission to God's the Father's will had its ultimate fulfillment in His obedience to the cross. This desire to do God's will was shown in the Garden of Gethsemane (Luk\_22:39-44).

b. **Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God:** The sacrifice of Jesus was determined before the foundation of the world (1Pe\_1:20; Rev\_13:8). But it was still an act of His will to submit to the cross at the appointed time and **by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.**

i. Our sanctification - our being set apart to God - is founded on the **will** of Jesus, not our own will. It is founded on the **offering** of Jesus, not on our own offering or sacrifices for God.

c. **Once for all:** These are the important words of this passage, and the writer to the Hebrews repeats the theme over and over again: **once for all.**

3. (Heb\_10:11-18) The finished work of Jesus Christ.

And every priest stands ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified. But the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us; for after He had said before, "This *is* the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them," *then He adds*, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember

no more.” Now where there is remission of these, *there is* no longer an offering for sin.

a. **Every priest stands ministering daily:** The priests had to *stand* continually in their work. Their work continued **daily** and sacrifices had to be **repeatedly** offered. The priests could never sit down! But Jesus **sat down at the right hand of God**, having finished His work of sacrificing for sin.

i. The seated posture of Jesus is important. It shows that His work is finished. He doesn’t need to stand

**ministering daily and offering repeatedly the same sacrifices** as priests under the Old Covenant had to.

Jesus still ministers in heaven - He has a ministry of intercession for His people. But that ministry flows from His completed work, so He can adopt a posture of *rest* - He **sat down at the right hand of God**.

b. **He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified:** This makes it plain that the work of Jesus is effective only for **those who are being sanctified**. The work of Jesus is *capable* of saving every human being, but it is only *effective* in saving **those who are being sanctified** (set apart to God).

c. **The Holy Spirit also witnesses to us . . . says the LORD:** In this passage, the writer to the Hebrews clearly identifies the **Holy Spirit** is equated as **the LORD**, *Yahweh* of the Old Testament. When the **Holy Spirit** speaks, the **LORD** speaks.

d. **This is the covenant:** In the passage quoted from Jeremiah, the writer to the Hebrews makes note of the promises of the new **covenant**, instituted by the Messiah.

i. **I will make with them after those days:** The new covenant is *new*. It comes **after those days**.

ii. **I will put My laws into their hearts:** The new covenant has to do with an *inner transformation*. God changes the heart of man, and writes His law **into their hearts**.

iii. **Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more:** The new covenant offers *complete forgiveness*. The forgiveness is so complete that God can say that doesn't even **remember** our sins in light of the new covenant!

iv. The Christian must endeavor to do with their sin exactly what God has done: forget about it. As well, this reminds us that the believer is *in no way* on probation. Before God, his past sin has no bearing on God's present dealing.

e. **Now where there is remission of these, there is no longer an offering for sin:** Where sins are really forgiven and forgotten (**remission of these**), there no longer must be an offering for sin.

B. Encouraging the discouraged in light of Jesus' perfect sacrifice.

1. (Heb\_10:19-22) Knowing Jesus has opened the way, let us draw near to God.

Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

a. **Having boldness:** Access has been given to us for a bold approach to God. The point is simple: we must take advantage of this access, and take it with **boldness**. On the Day of Atonement, the high priest entered the holiest place of all with fear and trembling, but we can **enter the Holiest** with **boldness**.

i. We can have **boldness** because we **enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus**. If we entered as the Old Testament high priest did, with the blood of animals, we wouldn't have **boldness**. But with the **blood of Jesus** providing **a new and living way which He consecrated with us**, we really can come into the presence of God with **boldness**.

b. **Through the veil:** The **veil** separated **the Holiest** from the *holy place*. To enter into **the Holiest**, you had to pass **through the veil**. But this veil separating man from God's intimate presence is forever opened wide, being torn into two from top to bottom. (Mat\_27:51) i. **That is, His flesh:** The writer to the Hebrews makes an analogy between the veil that stood between God and man and the body of Jesus. Jesus' body was "torn," and so was the veil, each indicating that now, we can come to God boldly.

c. **Having a High Priest over the house of God:** We have a High Priest who presides over the heavenly courts to make certain the believer has total access.

d. **Let us draw near:** With the perfect cleansing available to us, cleansing both the inner man (**hearts sprinkled**) and the outer man (**bodies washed**) we can **draw near** to God in a way never available to someone under the Old Covenant.

The work of Jesus makes us able to draw near in a **full assurance of faith**.

e. So, several issues have been settled. The problem of access to God has been settled. The problem of a perfect High Priest has been settled. The problem of moral and spiritual pollution has been settled. So now, **let us draw near!**

i. The encouragement to **draw near** wouldn't be given unless it was necessary. These discouraged Christians had a problem in drawing near. This was their *real* problem: they lost their intimate relationship with Jesus, and nothing else is going right.

ii. They may have thought that they had many, many problems - persecution, difficult relationships, hard times with culture or economy. But the real problem was their relationship with God wasn't on track. They didn't draw near to God on the basis of what Jesus had done.

iii. Are you in a tough time? Many people have gone through worse times and have had a better attitude, and more joy,

than you do now. What is the difference? They knew how to **draw near!**

iv. Just as importantly, they are reminded that they will never regain that intimacy coming through the institutions of the Old Covenant.

2. (Heb\_10:23) Let us hold fast to the truth.

Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful.

a. **Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering:** Discouragement made them waver from the truth. A renewed confidence in the greatness of Jesus and in the New Covenant will make them stand strong in the faith.

b. **For He who promised is faithful:** The reason we can stand strong is because **He who promised is faithful**. It is far better to trust in His faithfulness instead of ours!

3. (Heb\_10:24-25) Let us pursue the community of God's people.

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

a. **Let us consider one another:** Discouragement has made them avoid community at the very time they needed it most. Jesus meets us in one another to **stir up love and good works**.

b. **Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together:** Forsaking fellowship is a sure way to give place to discouragement. This discouragement festers where God's people are not **exhorting one another**.

i. Many people go to church if they feel they "need it" at the time. But our motivation for fellowship must be to obey God and *to give to others*. We can go to church looking to encourage someone who needs to hang in there against a tide of discouragement.

c. **So much the more as you see the Day approaching:** As **the Day** of Jesus' return draws nearer, we should be *more* committed to the fellowship of God's people, the **assembling of ourselves together**.

C. Another warning to endure.

1. (Heb\_10:26-31) The danger of a willful rejection of Jesus' perfect sacrifice for us.

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

a. **For if we sin willfully:** To **sin willfully** is defined in Heb\_10:29. It speaks of someone who has **trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace**. It is a knowing, deliberate rejection of Jesus' great work for us on the cross.

i. **Sin willfully:** In a sense, *every* sin is a "willful sin." But here, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of something much more severe and relevant to these discouraged Jewish Christians who contemplated a retreat from a distinctive Christianity and a return to Judaism with its sacrificial system. This is turning your back on Jesus.

b. **There no longer remains a sacrifice for sins:** If *Jesus'* sacrifice for sin is rejected, there remains *no other* sacrifice that can cleanse.



c. **How much worse punishment:** If someone *does* reject Jesus' sacrifice, fearful judgment is **certain**, even more certain than it was under the Old Covenant.

d. When we **sin willfully** by rejecting Jesus' work on the cross as sufficient, we have:

- i. **Trampled the Son of God underfoot:** We have disgraced Him by rejecting His greatest work. We devalue Him by devaluing what He did.

- ii. **Counted the blood of the covenant . . . a common thing:** We have considered that Jesus' blood was of no greater importance than the countless animals that had been sacrificed under the Old Covenant.

- iii. **Insulted the Spirit of grace:** We offend the Holy Spirit, whose purpose it is to present Jesus and His work to us (Joh\_16:8-15) when we reject Jesus and His finished work on our behalf. When we reject God's free gift of **grace** and seek to be justified by law.

e. **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God:** It is **fearful** indeed to one-day face the God you have rejected and offended so greatly!

2. (Heb\_10:32-34) Take heart in your discouragement, and remember how you have stood for God in tough times before.

But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven.

a. **But recall the former days:** These Christians had suffered for Jesus, being rejected from their Jewish community, and perhaps being counted as dead. This came after they trusted in Jesus (**after you were illuminated**).

b. The persecution came in many different ways, but it was **a great struggle with sufferings**. They were **made a**

**spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations.** They were **companions of those who were so treated** - including the writer to the Hebrews himself (**you had compassion on me in chains**). They also had faced economic persecution (**the plundering of your goods**). But the point is that they had faced these things, and had **endured** them. They could take a look at their past endurance, and be encouraged to keep standing strong in the future.

c. **Knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven:** They made it through the time of persecution by keeping a heavenly perspective. The writer to the Hebrews' point is clear: you can make it through this present time of discouragement as well.

3. (Heb\_10:35-39) Draw on your past experience to gain strength to endure for the future.

Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: "For yet a little while, *and* He who is coming will come and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith; but if *anyone* draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

a. **Therefore do not cast away your confidence:** These discouraged Christians were in danger of casting **away their confidence** in Jesus, and relapsing into an Old Covenant relationship with God.

b. **You have need of endurance:** They, and we, **have need of endurance** to receive the promise of God after we **have done the will of God**. The toughest and most discouraging trials are when we are called to obey God's will when the fulfillment of His promise seems so far away. This is why we need **endurance**. Faithfulness during the time

when the promise seems unfulfilled is the measure of your obedience and spiritual maturity.

i. This **endurance** is built through trials, the testing of our faith (Jam\_1:2-4).

c. **Now the just shall live by faith:** We need to follow in the footsteps of the **just** who will **live by faith**, and endure to see the promise fulfilled.

i. Every word in Hab\_2:4 is important, and the Lord quotes it three times in the New Testament just to bring out the fullness of the meaning!

ii. In Rom\_1:17, when Paul quotes this same passage from Hab\_2:4, the emphasis is on *faith*: “The just shall live by **faith**.”

iii. In Gal\_3:11, when Paul quotes this passage from Hab\_2:4, the emphasis is on *just*: “The **just** shall live by faith.”

iv. Here in Heb\_10:38, when the writer to the Hebrews quotes this same passage from Hab\_2:4, the emphasis is on *live*: “The just shall **live** by faith.”

d. **But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul:** This is a confident conclusion. We *will* be those who endure on and gain the promise of God. We will not **draw back** into old traditions or into an Old Covenant relationship with God - or any other replacement for Jesus!

(Heb 10:2) For otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers would have been purified once for all and so have<sup>2</sup> no further consciousness of sin?

(Heb 10:3) But in those sacrifices<sup>3</sup> there is a reminder of sins year after year.

(Heb 10:4) For the blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sins.<sup>4</sup>

(Heb 10:5) So when he came into the world, he said,

**" Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.**

(Heb 10:6) **" Whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you took no delight in.**

(Heb 10:7) **" Then I said, 'Here I am: 5 I have come — it is written of me in the scroll of the book — to do your will, O**

**God. ' "6**

(Heb 10:8) When he says above, **" Sacrifices and offerings and whole burnt offerings and sin-offerings you did not desire**

**nor did you take delight** in them"7 (which are offered according to the law), (Heb 10:9) then he says, **" Here I am: I have come to do your will."**8 He does away with9 the first to establish the second.

(Heb 10:10) By his will10 we have been made holy through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

(Heb 10:11) And every priest stands day after day11 serving and offering the same sacrifices again and again — sacrifices that can never take away sins.

(Heb 10:12) But when this priest12 had offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, *he sat down at the right hand* 13 of God, (Heb 10:13) where he is now waiting14 *until his enemies are made a footstool for his feet.*15

(Heb 10:14) For by one offering he has perfected for all time those who are made holy.

(Heb 10:15) And the Holy Spirit also witnesses to us, for after saying,16

(Heb 10:16) **" This is the covenant that I will establish with them after those days, says the Lord. I will put 17 my laws**

**on their hearts and I will inscribe them on their minds,"**18

(Heb 10:17) then he says,19 **" Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no longer."**20

(Heb 10:18) Now where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

(Heb 10:19) ***Drawing Near to God in Enduring Faith***

Therefore, brothers and sisters,<sup>21</sup> since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus,

(Heb 10:20) by the fresh and living way that he inaugurated for us<sup>22</sup> through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,<sup>23</sup>

(Heb 10:21) and since we have a great priest<sup>24</sup> over the house of God,

(Heb 10:22) let us draw near with a sincere heart in the assurance that faith brings,<sup>25</sup> because we have had our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience<sup>26</sup> and our bodies washed in pure water.

(Heb 10:23) And let us hold unwaveringly to the hope that we confess, for the one who made the promise is trustworthy.

(Heb 10:24) And let us take thought of how to spur one another on to love and good works,<sup>27</sup>

(Heb 10:25) not abandoning our own meetings, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging each other, and even more so because you see the day<sup>28</sup> drawing near.<sup>29</sup>

(Heb 10:26) For if we deliberately keep on sinning after receiving the knowledge of the truth, no further sacrifice for sins is left for us,<sup>30</sup>

(Heb 10:27) but only a certain fearful expectation of judgment and *a fury 31 of fire that will consume God's enemies.*<sup>32</sup>

(Heb 10:28) Someone who rejected the law of Moses was put to death<sup>33</sup> without mercy *on the testimony of two or three witnesses.*<sup>34</sup>

(Heb 10:29) How much greater punishment do you think that person deserves who has contempt for<sup>35</sup> the Son of God, and profanes<sup>36</sup>

the blood of the covenant that made him holy,<sup>37</sup> and insults the Spirit of grace?

(Heb 10:30) For we know the one who said, "**Vengeance is mine, I will repay,**"<sup>38</sup> and again, "**The Lord will judge his people.**"<sup>39</sup>

(Heb 10:31) It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

(Heb 10:32) But remember the former days when you endured a harsh conflict of suffering after you were enlightened.

(Heb 10:33) At times you were publicly exposed to abuse and afflictions, and at other times you came to share with others who were treated in that way.

(Heb 10:34) For in fact you shared the sufferings of those in prison,<sup>40</sup> and you accepted the confiscation of your belongings with joy, because you knew that you certainly<sup>41</sup> had a better and lasting possession.

(Heb 10:35) So do not throw away your confidence, because it<sup>42</sup> has great reward.

(Heb 10:36) For you need endurance in order to do God's will and so receive what is promised.<sup>43</sup>

(Heb 10:37) For **just a little longer** <sup>44</sup> and **he who is coming will arrive and not delay.**<sup>45</sup>

(Heb 10:38) **But my righteous one will live by faith, and if he shrinks back, I** <sup>46</sup> **take no pleasure in him.**<sup>47</sup>

(Heb 10:39) But we are not among those who shrink back and thus perish, but are among those who have faith and preserve their souls.<sup>48</sup>

(Heb 11:1) **People Commended for Their Faith**

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for, being convinced of what we do not see.

(Guzik)

**Heb 11:1-40**

**Hebrews 11 - EXAMPLES OF FAITH TO HELP THE DISCOURAGED**

A. Faith defined.

1. (Heb\_11:1) A definition of faith.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

a. **Now faith is the substance:** Just as our physical eyesight is the sense that gives us evidence of the material world, **faith** is the “sense” that gives us evidence of the invisible, spiritual world.

i. Faith has its reasons. We aren’t talking about a “blind leap” of faith. But the reasons can’t be measured in a laboratory, they have to be understood spiritually.

ii. “Faith extends beyond what we learn from our senses, and the author is saying that it has its reasons. Its tests are not those of the senses, which yield uncertainty.” (Morris)

iii. “Physical eyesight produces a conviction or evidence of visible things; faith is the organ which enables people to see the invisible order.” (Bruce)

b. **Of things hoped for . . . of things not seen:** If you have the substance before you, if you can see it, what use is there for **faith**? Faith is needed for what we *can’t* see and *can’t* touch.

i. Faith does not contradict reason, though it may go beyond reason. I may objectively prove the Bible is the most unique book ever published, and has impacted society more than any other book. But only faith can *prove* that the Bible is the *Word of God*. Therefore, this is a belief *beyond* reason, but not in *contradiction* to reason.

c. **Faith is the substance . . . the evidence:** Faith is *not* a bare belief or intellectual understanding. It is a willingness to trust in, to rely on, and to cling to.

2. (Heb\_11:2) Faith enabled people in the past to overcome. For by it the elders obtained a *good* testimony.

a. **For by it the elders:** The great examples of godliness all had different circumstances and personalities, but they all had one thing in common - faith.

b. **Obtained a good testimony:** These Jewish Christians had been discouraged, and were thinking of giving up on

Jesus and a distinctive Christianity. They needed **a good testimony**, and so they needed these examples of faith to break them out of discouragement.

3. (Heb\_11:3) Faith gives understanding to the invisible world.

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

a. **By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word:** How were **the worlds . . . framed by the word of God**? It happened when God simply commanded *Let there be light* (Gen\_1:3). As the Psalmist explains: *By the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth . . . For He spoke, and it was done; He commanded, and it stood fast.*" (Psa\_33:6; Psa\_33:9)

b. **By faith we understand:** We did not see this act of creation; we only know of it by **faith**. We also know this by *reason*, because we know the world was created, and created by an intelligent Designer. Again, this is faith going *beyond*, but not in *contradiction* to reason.

i. Even in times when it seems when God expects a faith that contradicts reason, closer examination reveals He does not. For example, it might seem contrary to reason for God to expect Abraham to believe that Sarah's dead womb could bring forth a child. But it is not unreasonable to believe that the God who created life and the womb could do this, and would do it according to His promise.

c. **By faith we understand:** This text *does not* say that God created the world with **faith**. Since God sees and knows all things, "faith" in a human sense is superfluous to Him. If faith is *the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*, what does God not see? What possibly could a sovereign Being "hope" for?

d. **So that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible:** Most scientists at the time



Hebrews was written believing the universe was created out of existing matter, not out of nothing, not out of **things which are visible**. But the Bible corrects this misunderstanding.

B. Faith at the beginning of man's history.

1. (Heb\_11:4) Abel's faith.

By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

a. **By faith Able offered to God a more excellent sacrifice:** The difference between the sacrifice of Cain and the sacrifice of Abel (Gen\_4:3-5) was not because one was animal, the other was vegetable. The difference was that Abel's sacrifice was made **by faith**.

i. "Abel's sacrifice was preferred to his brother's for no other reason than that it was sanctified by faith; for surely the fat of brute animals did not smell so sweetly, that it could, by its odour, pacify God." (Calvin)

b. **God testifying of his gifts:** How did God testify of Abel's gifts? It is likely that God showed His pleasure with Abel's sacrifice by consuming it with fire from heaven, as happened at the dedication of tabernacle (Lev\_9:24), the temple (2Ch\_7:1) and upon offerings made by David (1Ch\_21:26) and Elijah (1Ki\_18:38).

c. **Through it he being dead still speaks:** Right off with his example of Abel, the writer reminds us that faith is not necessarily rewarded on earth. But God Himself testifies to the righteousness of the faithful. Abel's blood still speaks to us, reminding us of the value of eternity!

2. (Heb\_11:5-6) Enoch's faith.

By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, "and was not found, because God had taken him"; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith *it is* impossible to please *Him*, for he who

comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

a. **By faith Enoch:** Enoch is one of the mystery men of the Old Testament being mentioned only in Gen\_5:21-24 as the man who *walked with God and he was not, for God took him.*

i. Many Jewish and Christian traditions make Enoch the recipient of some spectacular and esoteric revelations.

Jude recognizes him as a prophet (Jud\_1:14-15). But the value of other prophecies attributed to him is uncertain at the very best.

b. **By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death:** The writer to the Hebrews assumes that only a man of faith could enjoy close communion with God. Obviously, anyone who had this kind of fellowship with God must have pleased God, and in pleasing God, Enoch fulfilled the purpose for which man was created (Rev\_4:11).

c. **But without faith it is impossible to please Him:** This is the basic faith required of any who will seek God. One must **believe that He is**, and one must believe **He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him**. We must believe that God is there, and that He will reveal Himself to the seeking heart.

i. The writer to the Hebrews doesn't say that it is *difficult* to please God without faith. He says that it is **impossible**.

ii. "These two elements seem most simple, but, alas, how many professing Christians act as if God were not living; and how many others, though seeking after Him, are not *expecting from Him as Rewarder!*" (Newell) 3. (Heb\_11:7) Noah's faith.

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

a. **Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen:** Noah was warned of something that had never happened before. His faith was shown in not merely

agreeing that the flood would come, but in doing what God told him to do regarding the flood - he was **moved with godly fear**.

b. **Prepared an ark**: Real faith will always *do* something. The book of James repeats this theme over and over again.

c. **He condemned the world**: We shouldn't think that Noah was a man who preached sermons of condemnation to the world. Instead, the mere conduct of the godly, without any preaching at all, can feel like condemnation to the world.

C. Faith in the life of Abraham and the Patriarchs.

1. (Heb\_11:8) Abraham's obedience by faith.

By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going.

a. **By faith, Abraham obeyed**: Abraham did step out in faith, going to a new place God had promised him; but his faith was less than perfect. This is seen by comparing Gen\_12:1-5 with Act\_7:2-4, where it is evident that Abraham first went half way to the place God called him to go, and only *eventually* obeyed completely. Yet now, thousands of years later, God does not "remember" the delayed obedience, only the faith.

2. (Heb\_11:9-10) Abraham's sojourning life of faith.

By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as *in* a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker *is* God.

a. **By faith, he dwelt in the land of promise**: Abraham lived as a "sojourner" in the land God had promised, never owning any of it except the plots that he and Sarah were buried on. **Dwelt** is the ancient Greek word *paroikos*, describing a "resident alien" - one who lives somewhere, but doesn't have permanent status there.

i. A resident alien or a sojourner is evident. The way they talk, the way they dress, their mannerisms, their

entertainment, their citizenship, and their friends, all speak of their native home. If someone is the same in all these areas as the “natives,” they are no longer sojourners - they are permanent residents. Christians shouldn’t get “green cards” for planet earth!

b. **Dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob:** Because they had no permanent home, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived in **tents** instead of houses. They looked forward to a better city - **the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.**

3. (Heb\_11:11-12) Sarah’s faith and its results.

By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born *as many* as the stars of the sky in multitude; innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

a. **By faith Sarah:** Sarah’s faith was not perfect. She first laughed in unbelief (Gen\_18:9-15) and then she learned to laugh in faith (Gen\_21:6).

b. **Because she judged Him faithful who had promised:** Faith boils down to judging that God is faithful to and able to keep His promises. It was this faith that enabled Sarah to **receive strength to conceive seed**. God gave the strength, but Sarah had to receive it by faith.

c. **Were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude:** Because of the faith of Sarah and Abraham, thousands -

millions - of descendants were born. Their faith had an impact on more lives than they ever dreamed of.

4. (Heb\_11:13-16) What the faith of Abraham and Sarah teaches us.

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced *them* and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For those who say such things declare plainly

that they seek a homeland. And truly if they had called to mind that *country* from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly *country*. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

a. **These all died in faith, not having received the promises:** The promise of the Messiah was made to Abraham and Sarah, and they believed the promise. Yet they **died** having never received it, only seeing it **in faith**.

i. They **saw the promises afar off**, willing to look at and consider the promise of God, even though it seemed so far away.

ii. They **were assured of them**: They carefully considered the promise, and assured themselves that the promise had to be valid because it was God making the promise.

iii. They **embraced them**: They took the promise and embrace it in faith. How many times in a day do you think Abraham and Sarah thought of the son God promised had them? Many, many times - they **embraced** the promise.

iv. They **confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims**: Abraham and Sarah always took the promise with the understanding that this world was not their home; that God had a better and more enduring home for them in heaven.

v. If these examples of faith endured through difficulty and discouragement without **having received the promises**, how much more should we who have received those promises?

b. **They seek a homeland . . . they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country.** Walking in faith is easier when we remember that this world is not our home. It is easier when we remember that on this side of eternity, not everything is settled and every wrong is not righted. That is why they **seek a homeland** and a **better . . . heavenly country**.

i. Faith is very difficult when we live as “practical atheists.” This describes someone who may have a theoretical belief in God, but the belief doesn’t matter in what they do from day to day. When we remember there is a spiritual reality - a heavenly home that is our real home - faith is much easier.

ii. The great theme of our time is *naturalism*, the belief that only what can be found and measured in nature is “real.” Scientists and educators who believe in naturalism may be content to let us believe in God, just as long as we agree that God is a fairy tale - someone not *real*. But when we believe in the *reality* of God and of heaven and of His word, it is completely unacceptable to those who live by naturalism.

iii. H.L. Mencken said faith is the “Illogical belief in the occurrence of the impossible.” This would only be true if there is no God, or if He does not matter.

**c. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God:** But for those courageous enough to believe in God, and to believe in Him as *real*, and heaven and eternal life as *real*, **God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.**

i. We may speak of the fact that we cannot be ashamed of God; but do we often consider that God may be ashamed of us? When we do not regard God and heaven and eternity as real, there can be a sense in which God is **ashamed to be called our God!**

ii. As the hymn says:

*This world is not my home; I'm just a passin' through*  
My treasures are laid up somewhere beyond the blue  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.  
Oh, Lord, you know, I have no friend like You  
If heaven's not my home, then, Lord, what will I do?  
The angels beckon me from heaven's open door  
And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

5. (Heb\_11:17-19) Abraham's faith was great enough to know God was able to raise the dead, and that God was able to keep His promises no matter what.

By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten *son*, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God *was* able to raise *him* up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

a. **By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac:** The verb tense for **offered up** indicates that as far as Abraham was concerned, the sacrifice was complete. In his will and in his purpose, he really did sacrifice his son.

b. **Offered up his only begotten son:** Though Abraham had another son (Ishmael, the son of his fleshly attempt to fulfill God's promise), God did not recognize the other son (Gen\_22:1-14) - so Isaac could be called **his only begotten son**.

c. **Accounting that God was able:** **Accounting** means in the ancient Greek just what it sounds like in English. It is a term from arithmetic expressing "a decisive and carefully reasoned act." (Guthrie) This means that Abraham calculated God's promise worthy of confidence.

d. **From the dead, from which he also received him:** As far as Abraham was concerned, Isaac was as good as dead, and it was from the dead that he received him back, in a manner that prefigured the resurrection of Jesus.

i. Bruce wonders if this is not the incident that Jesus referred to in Joh\_8:56 : *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.*

e. When Abraham was confronted with a promise and a command from God which seemed to contradict each other, he did what we all should do: he obeyed the command and let God take care of the promise - which God was more than able to do!

6. (Heb\_11:20) Isaac's faith.

By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

a. **By faith Isaac blessed Jacob:** Isaac was really in the *flesh*, not in **faith**, when he first intended to bless Jacob and Esau. He wanted to bless Esau with the birthright for carnal reasons (he liked him as a more “manly” man, and he liked the wild game he brought home), instead of blessing Jacob, whom God had chosen.

b. Yet Isaac came to the place of **faith** when he discovered that he had actually blessed Jacob instead of Esau, Gen\_27:33

*says Isaac trembled exceedingly. When Isaac trembled exceedingly*, what was he troubled about? He was troubled because he knew that he had tried to box God in, to defeat God’s plan, and that God had beaten him. He realized that he would always be defeated when he tried to resist God’s will, even when he didn’t like it. And he came to learn that despite his arrogance against God’s will, God’s will was glorious.

c. So, where is the **faith** in Isaac’s blessing? After Isaac’s attempt to thwart the will of God had been destroyed, when he said of Jacob, *and indeed he shall be blessed* (Gen\_27:33). He knew that God had defeated his puny attempt to box God in, and he responded in the faith that says, “O.K. God, You win. Let Isaac be blessed with the birthright, and let Esau be blessed after him in his own way.”

7. (Heb\_11:21) Jacob’s faith.

By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, *leaning* on the top of his staff.

a. **By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph:** Jacob led a pretty carnal life. Yet, his faith could also look beyond death - and he blessed each of his sons.

8. (Heb\_11:22) Joseph’s faith.

By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions



concerning his bones.

a. **By faith Joseph:** Joseph **made mention of the departure of the children of Israel** in Gen\_50:24, when he said: *God will surely visit you, and bring you out of this land to the land of which He swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.* He knew God's promise was true!

b. **Gave instructions concerning his bones:** When Joseph died, he was never buried. His coffin laid above ground for the 400 or so years until it was taken back to Canaan. It was a silent witness all those years that Israel *was* going back to the Promised Land, just as God had said.

c. All during that time, when a child of Israel saw Joseph's coffin and asked what it was there for, and why it was not buried, they could be answered, "Because the great man Joseph did not want to be buried in Egypt, but in the Promised Land God will one day lead us to."

D. Faith in the nation of Israel.

1. (Heb\_11:23) The faith of Moses' parents.

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw *he was* a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.

a. **By faith Moses . . . was hidden three months by his parents:** Moses' parents showed faith when they perceived that he was specially favored by God, they took measures of faith to save his life despite danger.

2. (Heb\_11:24-26) The faith of Moses in Pharaoh's court.

By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

a. **Refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter:** Moses showed faith when he let God chart his destiny instead of letting Pharaoh do it.

b. **Choosing rather to suffer affliction:** This choice had consequences. Moses knew that to go God's way meant to **suffer affliction** rather than **to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin**. Sin does have its pleasures; but Moses properly saw them as passing, even if they should last our entire earthly lives!

c. **The reproach of Christ:** Moses probably didn't know it, at the time but the persecution he suffered for his choice of servanthood to God and His people put him in the company of Jesus - who suffered to set men free.

3. (Heb\_11:27) The faith of Moses when he left Egypt.

By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.

a. **By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king:** Moses' natural eyes could see the danger from Pharaoh, and understood the danger in remaining anywhere near Egypt. Yet his eye of faith could see **Him who is invisible**, and he understood that God was a greater fact in his situation than an angry Pharaoh was.

4. (Heb\_11:28) Moses showed faith when he led Israel in the Passover, in obedience to God's command.

By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

a. **By faith he kept the Passover:** It took faith to believe that the blood of a lamb on the door post would save a household from the terror of the angel of death. But Moses had that faith, and led the nation in observance of **the Passover**.

5. (Heb\_11:29) The faith of the nation of Israel when crossing the Red Sea.

By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry *land*, *whereas* the Egyptians, attempting *to do* so, were drowned.

a. **By faith they passed through the Red Sea:** The difference between the Israelites crossing the Red Sea and the Egyptians who followed them was not courage, but faith. The Egyptians had as much (or more) courage than the

Israelites, but not the same **faith** - and they each had different fates. The Israelites **passed through**, and the Egyptians **were drowned**.

6. (Heb\_11:30) The faith of the nation of Israel when circling around Jericho as God had commanded.

By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days.

a. **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down:** At Jericho, the people of Israel had a *daring* faith. There was no turning back, having already crossed the river Jordan at flood stage, which cut off any line of retreat.

b. At Jericho, the people of Israel had an *obedient* faith. They did not really understand what God was doing, yet they obeyed none the less.

c. **After they were encircled for seven days:** At Jericho, the people of Israel had a *patient* faith. The walls did not fall down for the first six days, yet they kept marching as God commanded.

d. At Jericho, the people of Israel had an *anticipating* faith. They knew God would act on the seventh day when they shouted.

7. (Heb\_11:31) The faith of Rahab.

By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

a. **By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish: Rahab** (Joshua 2) might seem an unusual example of faith, but her trust in God and willingness to identify with His people, no matter what the cost, is worthy of praise.

b. **When she had received the spies with peace:** When the Hebrew spies came to Rahab, she declared *He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath* (Jos\_2:11). This was proof of her faith. It was not strong faith, it was not perfect faith, but her faith was commendable nonetheless.

i. Clement of Rome, the earliest Christian writer outside of the Bible, was the first to see a symbol of the blood of Jesus in the scarlet cord which Rahab hung outside her window.

8. (Heb\_11:32) Other heroes of faith.

And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: a. **Gideon** was a man who boldly destroyed idols, and was mightily used of God to defeat a much larger army of Midianites (Judges 6-7). Yet he was also a man who doubted God's word to him at first, and repeatedly asked for confirmation.

b. **Barak** led the people of Israel in a dramatic victory over the Canaanites (Judges 4). Yet he hesitated and went forward only when Deborah encouraged him.

c. **Samson** was used mightily of the Lord to defeat the Philistines. Yet he never lived up to his potential, and had a tragic ending to his life after being enticed by Delilah (Judges 13-16).

d. **Jephthah** was used of God to defeat the Ammonites. Yet Jephthah made a foolish vow and stubbornly kept it (Judges 11).

e. **David** was a remarkable man of faith. Yet he also failed with Bathsheba and with his own children.

f. Each one of these were men of faith, yet had notable areas of failure in their life. Still, Hebrews 11 commends their faith, and lists them in the "Hall of Faith." This shows that weak faith is better than unbelief, and you don't have to be perfect to make it into God's "Hall of Faith."

9. (Heb\_11:33-35 a) By faith, some were victorious *over* circumstances.

Who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again.

a. Some of those who **subdued kingdoms**: David, Joshua, King Asa, Jehoshaphat, King Hezekiah, King Josiah.

- b. Some of those who **worked righteousness**: Elijah, Elisha, and all the prophets of God, and King Josiah also.
- c. Some of those who **obtained promises**: Caleb, Gideon, Barak.
- d. Some of those who **stopped the mouths of lions**: Daniel, David, and Benaiah (one of David's mighty men).
- d. Some of those who **quenched the violence of fire**: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.
- e. Some of those who **escaped the edge of the sword**: David escaped both the swords of Goliath and Saul, Moses escaped the sword of Pharaoh, and Elijah escaped the sword of Jezebel.
- f. Some of those who **out of weakness were made strong**: Sarah, Gideon, Abraham, Esther, and King Hezekiah.
- g. Some of those who **became valiant in battle**: David, King Asa, and Jehoshaphat.
- h. Some of those **women who received their dead raised to life again**: The widow of Zarepheth, and the Shunamite.

10. (Heb\_11:35-38) By faith, some were victorious *under* their circumstances.

And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented; of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in* dens and caves of the earth.

- a. **Tortured** in the ancient Greek language has the idea "to beat with a stick or a baton."
- b. **A better resurrection**: As Jesus said in Joh\_5:29, there is a resurrection unto life, and a resurrection unto

condemnation. These worthies received the **better resurrection**.

c. **Trial of mockings**: Isaac endured the cruel mocking of Ishmael, and Samson was mocked at the feast of the Philistines.

d. **Chains and imprisonments**: Joseph was cast into prison for his faith, and the evil King Ahab imprisoned the prophet Micaiah.

e. **They were stoned**: Zechariah was stoned to death between the altar and the temple, and Naboth was stoned to death by Jezebel's henchmen.

f. **Sawn in two**: According to reliable tradition, Isaiah was sawn in two and killed.

g. **Were tempted**: How does being **tempted** compare with these other persecutions? Some have thought the text was corrupted here, and the writer to the Hebrews originally wrote "branded" or "burnt alive" or "mutilated" or "strangled."

But for those who have known the pains of temptation, it is not unreasonable to think that the writer to the Hebrews regards overcoming temptation as a true triumph of faith.

h. **Were slain with the sword**: Such as the eighty-five priests murdered by Doeg, or the prophets murdered in Elijah's day.

i. **Wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins**: Such as Elijah, who wore this kind humble clothing and did not mind the humility or the discomfort.

j. **Of whom the world was not worthy**: The world is not necessarily friendly to people of faith, and the world isn't necessarily **worthy** of them either!

i. "The despised and ill-treated group of servants of God was of greater real worth than all the rest of humanity put together." (Morris)

k. **In dens and caves of the earth**: David, Elijah, and prophets under the leadership of Obadiah were all forced to flee and hide in caves.

11. (Heb\_11:39-40) Conclusion: We have even more reasons for faith, more reasons to hold on to faith, than these heroes of the faith did.

And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

a. Even though they **obtained a good testimony through faith**, they never saw the promise in the same way that we do on this side of the cross. They **did not receive the promise**, the testimony of the completed work of the Messiah on their behalf.

b. **God having provided something better for us:** We have been **provided something better** (seeing and enjoying the completed work of Jesus on our behalf) have *much more reason* to hold on to faith, and to not let discouragement and tough times defeat us.

c. **They should not be made perfect apart from us:** The idea of **perfect** is "complete." They could not be made complete until the work of Jesus; they looked forward to Jesus and His work, we look at it from behind - and enjoy the fruits of His work!

(Heb 11:2) For by it the people of old<sup>1</sup> received God's commendation.<sup>2</sup>

(Heb 11:3) By faith we understand that the worlds<sup>3</sup> were set in order at God's command,<sup>4</sup> so that the visible has its origin in the invisible.<sup>5</sup>

(Heb 11:4) By faith Abel offered God a greater sacrifice than Cain, and through his faith<sup>6</sup> he was commended as righteous, because God commended him for his offerings. And through his faith<sup>7</sup> he still speaks, though he is dead.

(Heb 11:5) By faith Enoch was taken up so that he did not see death, and he was not to be found because God took him up. For before his removal he had been commended as having pleased God.

(Heb 11:6) Now without faith it is impossible to please him, for the one who approaches God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

(Heb 11:7) By faith Noah, when he was warned about things not yet seen, with reverent regard<sup>8</sup> constructed an ark for the deliverance of his family. Through faith he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.

(Heb 11:8) By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place he would later receive as an inheritance, and he went out without understanding where he was going.

(Heb 11:9) By faith he lived as a foreigner<sup>9</sup> in the promised land as though it were a foreign country, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, who were fellow heirs<sup>10</sup> of the same promise.

(Heb 11:10) For he was looking forward to the city with firm foundations,<sup>11</sup> whose architect and builder is God.

(Heb 11:11) By faith, even though Sarah herself was barren and he was too old,<sup>12</sup> he received the ability to procreate,<sup>13</sup> because he regarded the one who had given the promise to be trustworthy.

(Heb 11:12) So in fact children<sup>14</sup> were fathered by one man — and this one as good as dead — *like the number of stars in the sky and like the innumerable grains of sand<sup>15</sup> on the seashore.*<sup>16</sup>

(Heb 11:13) These all died in faith without receiving the things promised,<sup>17</sup> but they saw them in the distance and welcomed them and acknowledged that they were strangers and foreigners<sup>18</sup> on the earth.

(Heb 11:14) For those who speak in such a way make it clear that they are seeking a homeland.

(Heb 11:15) In fact, if they had been thinking of the land that they had left, they would have had opportunity to return.

(Heb 11:16) But as it is,<sup>19</sup> they aspire to a better land, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be



called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.

(Heb 11:17) By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac. He had received the promises,<sup>20</sup> yet he was ready to offer up<sup>21</sup> his only son.

(Heb 11:18) God had told him, " ***Through Isaac descendants will carry on your name,***"<sup>22</sup>

(Heb 11:19) and he reasoned<sup>23</sup> that God could even raise him from the dead, and in a sense<sup>24</sup> he received him back from there.

(Heb 11:20) By faith also Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the future.

(Heb 11:21) By faith Jacob, as he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph and ***worshiped as he leaned on his staff.***<sup>25</sup>

(Heb 11:22) By faith Joseph, at the end of his life,<sup>26</sup> mentioned the exodus of the sons of Israel<sup>27</sup> and gave instructions about his burial.<sup>28</sup>

(Heb 11:23) By faith, when Moses was born, his parents hid him<sup>29</sup> for three months, because they saw the child was beautiful and they were not afraid of the king's edict.

(Heb 11:24) By faith, when he grew up, Moses refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,

(Heb 11:25) choosing rather to be ill-treated with the people of God than to enjoy sin's fleeting pleasure.

(Heb 11:26) He regarded abuse suffered for Christ<sup>30</sup> to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for his eyes were fixed on<sup>31</sup> the reward.

(Heb 11:27) By faith he left Egypt without fearing the king's anger, for he persevered as though he could see the one who is invisible.

(Heb 11:28) By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of the blood,<sup>32</sup> so that the one who destroyed the firstborn would not touch them.

(Heb 11:29) By faith they crossed the Red Sea as if on dry ground, but when the Egyptians tried it, they were swallowed up.

(Heb 11:30) By faith the walls of Jericho<sup>33</sup> fell after the people marched around them<sup>34</sup> for seven days.

(Heb 11:31) By faith Rahab the prostitute escaped the destruction of<sup>35</sup> the disobedient, because she welcomed the spies in peace.

(Heb 11:32) And what more shall I say? For time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets.

(Heb 11:33) Through faith they conquered kingdoms, administered justice,<sup>36</sup> gained what was promised,<sup>37</sup> shut the mouths of lions, (Heb 11:34) quenched raging fire,<sup>38</sup> escaped the edge of the sword, gained strength in weakness,<sup>39</sup> became mighty in battle, put foreign armies to flight, (Heb 11:35) and women received back their dead raised to life.<sup>40</sup> But others were tortured, not accepting release, to obtain resurrection to a better life.<sup>41</sup>

(Heb 11:36) And others experienced mocking and flogging, and even chains and imprisonment.

(Heb 11:37) They were stoned, sawed apart,<sup>42</sup> murdered with the sword; they went about in sheepskins and goatskins; they were destitute, afflicted, ill-treated

(Heb 11:38) (the world was not worthy of them); they wandered in deserts and mountains and caves and openings in the earth.

(Heb 11:39) And these all were commended<sup>43</sup> for their faith, yet they did not receive what was promised.<sup>44</sup>

(Heb 11:40) For God had provided something better for us, so that they would be made perfect together with us.<sup>45</sup>

(Heb 12:1) ***The Lord's Discipline***

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses,<sup>1</sup> we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, (Guzik)

**Heb 12:1-29**

## **Hebrews 12 - REASONS TO ENDURE DISCOURAGING TIMES**

A. Look unto Jesus.

1. (Heb\_12:1) Application of the demonstrations of enduring faith in Hebrews 11.

Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares *us*, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, a. **Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses:** The author envisions these previous champions of faith as spectators from the heavens, cheering us on as we endeavor to overcome present discouragement as in an athletic competition.

i. The idea of the heroes of faith in the past being spectators as we live lives of faith has made some think that in heaven, people can and do observe what goes on earth. This single passage may *suggest* this, but it is inconclusive to *prove* this.

ii. We rightly think of heaven as a place where people are always happy and untroubled; it would be hard to think that those in heaven could be happy and untroubled if they saw what was happening on the earth. So, it is difficult to say that people in heaven are actually observing us!

iii. Others consider that these **witnesses** are not witnessing *us* as we conduct our lives. Instead, they are **witnesses** to us of faith and endurance.

iv. "Both the *Greeks* and the *Latins* frequently use the term *cloud*, to express a *great number* of persons or things."

(Clarke)

b. **Lay aside every weight, and the sin:** Sin can hold us back. But there are also things that may not be sin (**every weight**) but are merely hindrances that can keep us from running effectively the race God has for us.

i. Our choices are not always between right and wrong, but between something that may hinder us and something

else that may not. Is there a **weight** in your life you must **lay aside**?

c. **So easily ensnares us: Easily ensnares** translates a difficult ancient Greek word ( *euperistaton*), which can be translated four ways: “easily avoided,” “admired,” “ensnaring,” or “dangerous.”

i. Some sins can be *easily avoided*, but are not. Some sins are *admired*, yet must be laid aside. Some sins are *ensnaring* and thus especially harmful. And some sins are more *dangerous* than others are. Let us **lay** them all **aside**!

ii. If such ensnaring sins were really the work of demonic possession or demonic influence in the Christian, wouldn't this not be an ideal place for the Holy Spirit to address this? Yet we are never given reason to blame our sin on demons; the appeal is simply for us to, in the power of the Holy Spirit, **lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us.**

d. **Let us run with endurance:** What is needed is **endurance**, to finish what we have begun in Jesus Christ - a **race that is set before us.**

i. God has set before you a **race**. You must run it; and it will involve effort and commitment. Just being passive never runs a race. God wants us to run the race, and finish it right!

ii. In Act\_20:24, Paul pictures himself as a runner who had a race to finish, and nothing would keep Paul from finishing the race with joy. In that passage, Paul speaks of *my race* - he had his race to run, we have our own - but God calls us to finish it with joy, and that only happens with **endurance**.

e. **Race** is the ancient Greek word *agona*, a word used for conflict or struggle of many kinds, and a favorite word of Paul (Php\_1:30, Col\_2:1, 1Th\_2:2, 1Ti\_6:12, 2Ti\_4:7).

i. **Endurance** is needed to run that race. **Endurance** translates the ancient Greek word *hupomone*, “which does not mean the patience which sits down and accepts things but the patience which masters them . . . It is a

determination, unhurrying and yet undelaying, which goes steadily on and refuses to be deflected.” (Barclay)

2. (Heb\_12:2) The ultimate example: Jesus Christ.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

a. **Looking unto Jesus:** The *New American Standard Version* translates this beautifully: *fixing our eyes on Jesus*. We can only run the race as we look to Jesus, and have our eyes locked on to Him. He is our focus, our inspiration, and our example.

i. In the ancient Greek, **looking unto Jesus** uses a verb that implies a definite *looking away* from other things and a present *looking unto* Jesus.

ii. We must guard against seeing Jesus as *only* an example; He was and is so much more. But He also remains the ultimate example of Christian endurance.

b. **The author and finisher of our faith:** Jesus is not only the **author** of our faith; He is the **finisher** of it also. The idea of *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ* (Php\_1:6) is comforting indeed to these discouraged Christians.

c. **Who for the joy that was set before Him:** Jesus did not regard the cross itself as a joy. But He could look past the horror of the cross to enjoy the joy beyond it. The same mentality will enable these Jewish Christians (and we ourselves) to endure.

d. **Despising the shame:** One of the most prominent elements of the torture of the cross was its extreme **shame**. Jesus did not welcome this shame - He *despised* it! - yet He endured through the shame.

i. This is a stumbling block to many; they will do just about anything for Jesus except endure shame or embarrassment. Spurgeon spoke boldly to Christians who could not bear the shame that comes from the world for

following Jesus: “Yet you are a coward. Yes, put it down in English: you are a coward. If anybody called you so you would turn red in the face; and perhaps you are not a coward in reference to any other subject. What a shameful thing it is that while you are bold about everything else you are cowardly about Jesus Christ. Brave for the world and cowardly towards Christ!”

e. **And has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God:** This speaks of Jesus’ glorification. The same promise of being glorified after our shame (though in a different sense) is true for the Christian.

3. (Heb\_12:3-4) Consider Jesus.

For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.

a. **You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin:** These Jewish Christians were so discouraged because they were starting to experience significant social and economic persecution (though not yet to the shedding of blood).

b. But they should **consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself**, and be *encouraged*, not *discouraged*, knowing that they are following in the footsteps of Jesus. As Paul wrote, *if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.* (Rom\_8:17)

c. **Lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls:** Knowing that Jesus doesn’t ask more of us than what He has Himself experienced, and that He knows exactly what we are going through keeps us from becoming **weary and discouraged in your souls.**

B. Why God allows difficult times: the chastening of God.

1. Introductory thoughts on the subject of chastening.

a. Heb\_12:5-11 deals with the question “why does God allow such difficult times as we are going through.” This is a question commonly asked in seasons of discouragement.

b. We must admit that God does *allow* every thing that happens; so He must at least passively approve of it, because He certainly has the power to stop bad things that happen.

i. Of course, God can *never* be the author of evil. But He does allow others to choose evil, and He can use the evil choice another makes to work out His ultimately good purpose, even if only to demonstrate His justice and righteousness in contrast to evil.

c. The discussion of *chastening* that follows should not be regarded as the *only* reason God allows difficult times, but it is an important one. For example, we know that God allows difficult times so that we can, at a later time, comfort someone else with the same comfort God shows towards us in our crisis (2Co\_1:3-7).

2. (Heb\_12:5-6) Remember the exhortation regarding the discipline of the Lord.

And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives."

a. **You have forgotten:** One great reason for the discouragement among these Jewish Christians was because they saw no reason why God would allow difficult times to arise. But they have forgotten principles regarding the chastening of the Lord.

i. How much of the difficulty in our Christian life can be traced back to those three words: **you have forgotten!**

Perhaps it is some principle we remember in our minds, but we **have forgotten** it with our hearts - and we must remember it again!

b. **Which speaks to you as sons:** The quotation from Pro\_3:11-12 reminds us that God's chastening should *never* be taken as a sign of His rejection. It is rather a sign of His treating us as His children.

i. Only the most proud Christian would claim they are never in need of correction from God. No one is above this kind of training.

c. God's chastening can come in many forms; and what may be God's chastening to endure in the life of one believer may be a Satanic attack to resist in the life of another.

i. This is why James recommends a prayer for wisdom in the context of enduring trials (Jam\_1:2-5). We need to know how to react differently when God does different things.

3. (Heb\_12:7-8) Chastening a sign of sonship.

If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.

a. **God deals with you as sons:** Many people claim an inability to relate to God as a loving Father, because they have never known a loving human father in their own experience. Yet, even these can still receive the love of God the Father.

i. We have not all known by *experience* what a model father is, but we do all know by *intuition* what a good father is. God is that perfect Father, and He has given us that intuition.

b. **God deals with you as sons:** God's correction is never to punish us, never to make us *pay* for our sins. That was done once and for all at the cross. His correction is motivated *only* by His love, not by His justice; He chastens us without anger.

c. **If you are without chastening . . . you are illegitimate and not sons:** Those who fancy themselves "beyond"

God's chastening mark themselves as **illegitimate** children of God.

d. God demonstrates His wrath when He ignores our sin, allowing it to pass without correction. His inactivity is never due to ignorance or a lack of initiative, as may be the case with a human father.



4. (Heb\_12:9-10) God's chastening is superior to that of human fathers.

Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected *us*, and we paid *them* respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened *us* as seemed *best* to them, but He for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of His holiness.

a. **We paid them respect:** We should be even more submissive and respectful to our Heavenly Father's correction than to an earthly Father's correction.

b. **Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of Spirits and live?** Therefore, we must never despise God for His chastening, though it is unpleasant. When we resent it, we consider ourselves virtual equals with God, instead of His children.

i. It is humiliating and bitter to be chastened by an equal, but not by one who is legitimately our superior.

Resentment at chastening shows how we see God and how we see ourselves.

c. **But He for our profit:** Human fathers, even with the best of intention, can only chasten imperfectly, because they lack perfect knowledge. The all-knowing God can chasten us perfectly, with better and more lasting results than even the best earthly father.

5. (Heb\_12:11) Look to the *result* of chastening more than the *process* of chastening.

Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

a. **Afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness:** Our author isn't trying to deny the unpleasant nature of a "heavenly spanking" (**no chastening seems to be joyful for the present**). But he does want us to look beyond the *process* to the *result*.

b. **The peaceable fruit of righteousness:** Is this **fruit** evident in your life? The reason why many live a “one-crisis-after-another” life is because they are either blind to God’s chastening, or are resisting it. They have not been **trained by it**, and so the **peaceable fruit of righteousness** is not evident.

i. They never experience the **peaceable fruit of righteousness** because they have never been **trained by** God’s chastening.

ii. **Trained** in the ancient Greek language is a word from the world of athletics; as an athlete is trained by some agony, so are we - as God’s “spiritual athletes.”

c. God has a purpose for training you. Think of David after being attacked by a lion while just he was just a boy tending the sheep. “Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen to me?” He might of thought. “I barely escaped!” But if only David could see ahead, he would see God had a giant named Goliath he was destined to face, and the battle with the lion prepared him ahead of time. God always has a purpose. We can trust Him.

C. Application: Get strong, get right, get bold, and watch out.

1. (Heb\_12:12-13) Get strong.

Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be *dislocated*, but rather be healed.

a. **Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down:**

Almost like a coach or a military officer, the author tells the “troops” to get with it. He has given exhaustive *reasons* to be strong in the Lord and put off discouragement, so now is the time to *do it*.

b. The pictures here (strengthened **hands** and **knees**, “straight-ahead” **feet**) speak of readiness to work and move for the Lord. This readiness is first to go when one surrenders to discouragement.

2. (Heb\_12:14-17) Get right.

Pursue peace with all *people*, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; lest there *be* any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

a. Get right with both men (**pursue peace with all men**) and with God (**and holiness**). Discouragement makes us sloppy and unconcerned with our personal relationships.

i. Regarding holiness, we are told **without which no one will see the Lord**. A lack of holiness is a critical obstacle to a close relationship with God.

b. **Lest anyone fall short of the grace of God**: We must get right with God's grace. So look diligently to keep both yourself and others from a return to legalism in either outward form or inward attitude that falls short of God's grace, **lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble**.

i. "A *bitter root* is a root that bears bitter fruit . . . So it is possible for the seed of bitterness to be sown in a community and, though nothing is immediately apparent, in due time the inevitable fruit appears." (Morris)

ii. Many are corrupted because of bitterness towards someone they feel has wronged them, and they hold on to the bitterness with amazing stubbornness! What they must do is remember the grace of God extended to them, and start extending that grace towards others - loving the undeserving.

iii. A legalistic attitude will always produce a bitterness that defiles many; its emphasis on what we should do for God before what He has done for us in Jesus puts us (and those around us) in a terrible performance trap.

c. **Lest there be any fornicator or profane person:** Get right with your moral conduct; remember that there are blessings reserved only for the *pure in heart: they shall see God* (Mat\_5:8).

i. **Like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright:** Many Christians today sell a birthright of intimacy with God as cheaply as Esau sold his birthright (Gen\_25:29-34 and Gen\_27:30-40).

ii. **Though he sought it diligently with tears:** Esau's birthright wasn't restored simply because he wished it back. It could never be regained because he despised it.

3. (Heb\_12:18-24) Get bold.

For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard *it* begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. (For they could not endure what was commanded: "And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow." And so terrifying was the sight *that* Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.") But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than *that of* Abel.

a. **For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire:** Exo\_19:10-25

explains what it was like when Israel came to Mount Sinai. The mountain was fenced off; there was no trespassing, on pain of death. They were commanded to wash their clothes and abstain from sexual relations. There was thunder, lightning and a thick cloud. There was the sound of a trumpet, calling forth the nation to meet with God. There

was more smoke, like a furnace, and earthquakes; then the trumpet sounded long - until Moses spoke, and God Himself answered.

God spoke to Israel from Sinai, but warned them in every way possible to *stay away*.

b. **So that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore:** The reaction of Israel was understandable: they were terrified (Exo\_20:18-21). They wanted the experience to *stop*, not to continue.

i. Did this fear work in promoting holiness among the people of Israel? Did it change the heart of Israel? 40 days later, they worshipped a gold calf, saying it was the god that brought them out of Egypt!

c. But we are in a different place. **For you have not come to the mountain:** Our relationship with God is not modeled after Israel's experience on Mount Sinai. We come to God's other mountain: Zion, the name of the hill upon which Jerusalem sits.

d. Contrasts between Mount Sinai and Mount Zion.

i. Mount Sinai was marked by fear and terror. Mount Zion is a place of love and forgiveness.

ii. Mount Sinai is in the desert. Mount Zion is the city of the Living God.

iii. Mount Sinai spoke of earthly things. Mount Zion speaks of heavenly things.

iv. At Mount Sinai, only Moses was allowed to draw near to God. At Mount Zion, an **innumerable company**, a **general assembly** is invited to draw near.

v. Mount Sinai was characterized by guilty men in fear. Mount Zion features **just men made perfect**.

vi. At Mount Sinai, Moses was the mediator. At Mount Zion, Jesus is the mediator.

vii. Mount Sinai brings an Old Covenant, which was ratified by the blood of animals. Mount Zion brings a New Covenant, which is ratified by the blood of God's precious Son.

vii. Mount Sinai was all about exclusion, keeping people away from the mountain. Mount Zion is all about invitation.

ix. Mount Sinai is all about Law. Mount Zion is all about grace.

e. **But you have come to Mount Zion:** The lesson is plain. We shouldn't come to Mount Zion as if we were coming to Mount Sinai. So put away your hesitation and get bold in coming to God!

i. Of course, the idea of the superiority of the New Covenant is also repeated. How could these Jewish Christians even consider going back and preferring the religion of Mount Sinai over the relationship of Mount Zion?

f. **The blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel:** The **blood of Abel** does not mean the blood he shed in his martyrdom. Rather, it was the blood of the sacrifice he made - the first recorded sacrifice from man to God in the Bible. The blood of Jesus **speaks better things** than the blood of animal sacrifice, the blood of Abel.

4. (Heb\_12:25-29) Watch out.

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more *shall we not escape* if we turn away from Him who *speaks* from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is* a consuming fire.

a. **See that you do not refuse Him who speaks:** If we refuse to get strong, get right, and get bold, we should not remain ignorant of the consequences.

b. **They did not escape:** There were consequences for rebelling at Mount Sinai. How much more should there be consequences for resisting God's greater work at Zion?

c. **Whose voice then shook the earth . . . Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven . . .**

**things which cannot be shaken:** God is shaking the present order, and these beleaguered Jewish Christians felt it. But the things of God and the people of God will remain.

d. **Since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace:** The kingdom itself will never be shaken. So it behooves us to seize God's unmerited approval in Jesus, helping us to **serve God acceptably**.

i. Many wrongly argue that "too much" grace gives license and breeds disrespect towards God. Actually, grace gives us **reverence and godly fear**. Perhaps those who think grace gives them license to sin aren't walking in grace at all!

e. **Our God is a consuming fire:** Since God is in fact a consuming fire, we do best to come to Him on His terms. These are the terms of unmerited approval in Jesus. He will consume all that is outside of that sphere.

(Heb 12:2) keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and *has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne* of God.<sup>2</sup>

(Heb 12:3) Think of him who endured such opposition against himself by sinners, so that you may not grow weary in your souls and give up.

(Heb 12:4) You have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed<sup>3</sup> in your struggle against sin.

(Heb 12:5) And have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons?

**" My son, do not scorn <sup>4</sup> the Lord's discipline or give up when he corrects <sup>5</sup> you.**

(Heb 12:6) " ***For the Lord disciplines the one he loves and chastises every son he accepts.*** "6

(Heb 12:7) Endure your suffering<sup>7</sup> as discipline;<sup>8</sup> God is treating you as sons. For what son is there that a father does not discipline?

(Heb 12:8) But if you do not experience discipline,<sup>9</sup> something all sons<sup>10</sup> have shared in, then you are illegitimate and are not sons.

(Heb 12:9) Besides, we have experienced discipline from<sup>11</sup> our earthly fathers<sup>12</sup> and we respected them; shall we not submit ourselves all the more to the Father of spirits and receive life?<sup>13</sup>

(Heb 12:10) For they disciplined us for a little while as seemed good to them, but he does so for our benefit, that we may share his holiness.

(Heb 12:11) Now all discipline seems painful at the time, not joyful.<sup>14</sup> But later it produces the fruit of peace and righteousness<sup>15</sup> for those trained by it.

(Heb 12:12) Therefore, ***strengthen*** <sup>16</sup> ***your listless hands and your weak knees,***<sup>17</sup>

(Heb 12:13) and ***make straight paths for your feet,***<sup>18</sup> so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but be healed.

(Heb 12:14) ***Do Not Reject God's Warning***

Pursue peace with everyone, and holiness,<sup>19</sup> for without it no one will see the Lord.

(Heb 12:15) See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God, that no one be like *a bitter root springing up* <sup>20</sup> and causing trouble, and through him many become defiled.

(Heb 12:16) And see to it that no one becomes<sup>21</sup> an immoral or godless person like Esau, who *sold his own birthright for a single meal.*<sup>22</sup>

(Heb 12:17) For you know that<sup>23</sup> later when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no opportunity for repentance, although he sought the blessing<sup>24</sup> with tears.



(Heb 12:18) For you have not come to something that can be touched,<sup>25</sup> to a burning fire and darkness and gloom and a whirlwind (Heb 12:19) and the blast of a trumpet and a voice uttering words<sup>26</sup> such that those who heard begged to hear no more.<sup>27</sup>

(Heb 12:20) For they could not bear what was commanded: "***If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned.***"<sup>28</sup>

(Heb 12:21) In fact, the scene<sup>29</sup> was so terrifying that Moses said, "***I shudder with fear.***"<sup>30</sup>

(Heb 12:22) But you have come to Mount Zion, the city<sup>31</sup> of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, to the assembly (Heb 12:23) and congregation of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous, who have been made perfect, (Heb 12:24) and to Jesus, the mediator<sup>32</sup> of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks of something better than Abel's does.<sup>33</sup>

(Heb 12:25) Take care not to refuse the one who is speaking! For if they did not escape when they refused the one who warned them on earth, how much less shall we, if we reject the one who warns from heaven?

(Heb 12:26) Then his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "***I will once more shake not only the earth but heaven too.***"<sup>34</sup>

(Heb 12:27) Now this phrase "***once more***" indicates the removal of what is shaken, that is, of created things, so that what is unshaken may remain.

(Heb 12:28) So since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us give thanks, and through this let us offer worship pleasing to God in devotion and awe.

(Heb 12:29) For our ***God is indeed a devouring fire.***<sup>35</sup>

(Heb 13:1) ***Final Exhortations***

Brotherly love must continue.

(Guzik)

## **Heb 13:1-25**

### ***Hebrews 13 - LIVING A POSITIVE CHRISTIAN LIFE***

A. Instructions for body life.

1. (Heb\_13:1-3) Express brotherly love.

Let brotherly love continue. Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so *doing* some have unwittingly entertained angels.

Remember the prisoners as if chained with them; those who are mistreated; since you yourselves are in the body also.

a. **Let brotherly love continue:** The writer to the Hebrews uses the ancient Greek word *philadelphia* here. He *assumes* that there is **brotherly love** among Christians. He simply asks that it would **continue** among them.

i. In the ancient Greek language the New Testament was written in, there were four words at hand that we might translate *love*. *Eros* was one word for love. It described, as we might guess from the word itself, *erotic* love. It refers to sexual love. *Storge* was a second word for love. It refers to family love, the kind of love there is between a parent and child, or between family members in general. *Agape* is another word for love. It is the most powerful word for *love* in the New Testament, and is often used to describe God's love towards us. It is a love that loves without changing. It is a self-giving love that gives without demanding or expecting re-payment. It is love so great that it can be given to the unlovable or unappealing. It is love that loves even when it is rejected. *Agape* love gives and loves because it wants to; it does not demand or expect repayment from the love given - it gives because it loves, it does not love in order to receive. *Agape* love isn't about *feelings*, it is about *decisions*.

ii. But the word for **love** used in Heb\_13:1 is *philadelphia*, coming from the root *philia*. This ancient Greek word speaks of a brotherly friendship and affection. It is the love of deep friendship and partnership. There should always be plenty of this kind of love among Christians, and it should **continue**.

b. **Do not forget to entertain strangers:** Hospitality is an important virtue, and often it is commanded of Christians and leaders (Rom\_12:10-13; 1Ti\_3:2; Tit\_1:7-8; 1Pe\_4:9). In the ancient world, “motels,” where they did exist, were notorious for immorality. It was important for traveling Christians to find open homes from other Christians. This was simply a practical way to **let brotherly love continue**.

i. Because of the free offer of hospitality, Christians had to watch out for people just masquerading as Christians so they could leech off the generosity of God’s people. As time went on, Christian leaders taught their people how to recognize these kind of deceivers.

i. The Didache was an early church “ministry manual,” written perhaps somewhere between 90 and 110 A.D. It has this to say about how to tell if a false prophet is abusing the hospitality of those in the church:

*Let every apostle that comes to you be received as the Lord. But he shall not remain except one day; but if there be need, also the next; but if he remains three days, he is a false prophet. And when the apostle goes away, let him take nothing but bread . . . but if he asks for money, he is a false prophet. And every prophet that speaks in the Spirit you shall neither try nor judge; for every sin shall be forgiven, but this one sin shall not be forgiven. But not everyone that speaks in the Spirit is a prophet; but only if he holds the ways of the Lord. Therefore from their ways shall the false prophet and the true prophet be known. (From The Ante-Nicean Fathers, Volume 7, page 380).*

c. **Strangers:** The point is that we do this for other Christians who are **strangers** to us. If you invite your best friends over for lunch, that is wonderful - but it doesn’t fulfill this command. A wonderful way to fulfill this command is to meet and befriend **strangers** at church, and to **entertain** them with hospitality.

i. The ancient Greek word for *hospitality* (used in passages like Rom\_12:13) is literally translated, “love for strangers.”

**Brotherly love** means love for all our brothers and sisters in Jesus, not just those who are currently our friends.

d. **For by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels:** When we are hospitable to others, we really welcome Jesus (Mat\_25:35), and perhaps angels. Abraham (Gen\_18:1-22) and Lot (Gen\_19:1-3) are examples of those who **unwittingly entertained angels**.

e. **Remember the prisoners as if chained with them:** **Prisoners** here probably has first reference to those imprisoned for the sake of the Gospel. But it can also be extended to all that are in prison. This is just another way to **let brotherly love continue**.

2. (Heb\_13:4) Honor marital love.

Marriage *is* honorable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

a. **The bed undefiled:** The Bible strictly condemns sex outside of the marriage commitment (**fornicators and adulterers God will judge**). But the Bible celebrates sexual love within the commitment of marriage, as in The Song of Solomon.

i. "Fornication and adultery are not synonymous in the New Testament: adultery implies unfaithfulness by either party to the marriage vow, while the word translated "fornication" covers a wide range of sexual irregularities."

(Bruce)

b. **Marriage is honorable among all, and the bed undefiled:** Perhaps through a past of sexual sin, many people have a difficult time really believing that the marriage **bed** is **undefiled**. Guilt and sexual hang-ups are appropriate to extra-marital sex, but not in marital sex. But this is where the guilt and sexual hang-ups often exist, and where they most frequently cause trouble.

i. The enemy of our souls wants to do everything he can to encourage sex *outside* of the marriage **bed**, and he wants to do everything he can to discourage sex *inside* the marriage

**bed.** We need to recognize this strategy and not give it a foothold among us.

c. Though God allows real freedom in the variety of sexual expression in marriage, all must be done with a concern for the other's needs and in love (1Co\_7:2-5 and Eph\_5:21-33).

3. (Heb\_13:5-6) Learn contentment over covetousness.

*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?"*

a. **Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content: Covetousness** is the opposite of *contentment*. Often **covetousness** and greed are excused or even admired in today's culture, and are simply called "ambition."

b. Paul had the right idea in Php\_4:11-13 : *Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

Contentment has much more to do with what you *are* on the inside rather than what you *have*.

i. Someone asked millionaire Bernard Baruch, "How much money does it take for a rich man to be satisfied?"

Baruch answered, "Just a million more than he has."

c. **So we may boldly say: "The LORD is my helper."**

Real contentment comes only when we trust in God to meet our needs and to be our security. It is amazing that we are often more likely to put security and find contentment in things far less reliable and secure than God Himself!

4. (Heb\_13:7) Follow your leaders.

Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of *their* conduct.

a. **Remember those who rule over you:** We are told to recognize and follow godly leadership in the body of Christ, leadership that is shown to be legitimate by faithfulness to the **word of God** and by godly **conduct**.

i. Paul advised Timothy along the same lines: *Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.* (1Ti\_4:16)

b. Such leaders should be recognized (**remember those**) and followed. Just as much as a church needs godly leaders, it also needs godly *followers*.

B. Instructions in worship.

1. (Heb\_13:8) The enduring principle: **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.**

Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.

a. **Jesus Christ is the same:** The unchanging nature (which theologians call *immutability*) of Jesus Christ could be inferred from His deity, even if it were not explicitly stated. God doesn't change over the ages, so neither does Jesus, who is God.

b. His unchanging nature provides a measure for all Christian conduct, particularly in the word and in worship. We should not expect something completely "new" as if it were from a "new Jesus." The nature of Jesus as it is revealed in the Bible is the same nature of Jesus that should be seen in the church today.

2. (Heb\_13:9-14) Following the rejected Jesus.

Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For *it is* good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. For the bodies of those animals, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned outside the camp. Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.

Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach. For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come.

a. **Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines:** There has never been a shortage of **various and strange doctrines** in the church. The ones specifically in mind here seem to deal with a return to Mosaic ceremonies and laws that were fulfilled in Jesus.

b. **For it is good that the heart be established by grace:** Our hearts will only be **established by grace**. We are **established** by an understanding and appropriation of God's undeserved approval of us, and not by an assumed approval gained through keeping a list of rules (**not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them**).

c. **We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat:** These Jewish Christians had probably been branded as illegitimate by other Jews because they did not continue the Levitical system. But the writer to the Hebrews insists that **we have an altar**, and it is an altar that those who insist on clinging to the Levitical system have no right to.

i. Essentially, our **altar** is the cross - the centerpiece of the Christian gospel and understanding (1Co\_1:18-24; 1Co\_2:1-5).

d. **Jesus . . . suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach:** If our Savior was rejected and His sacrifice (performed at the cross, our **altar**) was branded illegitimate, what better do we expect? Identifying with Jesus often means **bearing His reproach**, the very thing many are quite unwilling to do.

i. **Outside the camp:** The **camp** referred to is institutional Judaism, which had rejected Jesus and Christianity.

Though these Christians from Jewish backgrounds had been raised to consider everything **outside the camp** as

unclean and evil, they must follow Jesus there.

e. **For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come:** The difficult job of **bearing His reproach** is easier when we remember that the city or society we are cast out of is only temporary. We **seek**, and belong to, the permanent city yet to come.

3. (Heb\_13:15-16) Our sacrifice.

Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of *our* lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

a. **Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God:** Because we do have an *altar* (the cross) and we do have a High Priest (Jesus), we should always offer sacrifices. But they are not the bloody sacrifices of the old covenant, but the **sacrifice of praise**, the **fruit of our lips**.

i. The writer to the Hebrews spells out several essentials for proper praise.

- Praise that pleases God is offered **by Him**, that is, by Jesus Christ, on the ground of His righteousness and pleasing God.
- Praise that pleases God is offered **continually**, so that we are always praising Him.
- Praise that pleases God is a **sacrifice of praise**, in that it may be costly or inconvenient.
- Praise that pleases God is **the fruit of our lips**, more than just thoughts directed towards God. It is spoken out unto the Lord, either in prose or in song. "What proceeds from the lips is regarded as *fruit*, which reveals the character of its source, as the fruit of a tree reveals the nature of the tree." (Guthrie)

b. **But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased:** Praise is not the only sacrifice that pleases God. We also perform sacrifice that pleases God when we **do good** and **share**. Praise and



worship are important, but the Christian's obligation do not end there.

4. (Heb\_13:17) Follow your leaders.

Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.

a. **Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive:**

We are to **be submissive** to the leaders God has given us (assuming they have the character mentioned in Heb\_13:7). We are simply told to **obey those who rule** over us. When speaking on the authority of God's Word, leaders *do* have a right to tell us how to live and walk after God.

i. Sadly, many have taken the idea of submission to leaders in the church much too far; the "Shepherding Movement" was a clear example of this kind of abuse (which many seem to welcome, wanting someone else to be responsible for their lives). "A teacher should teach us to submit to God, not to himself." (Chuck Smith)

b. **As those who must give account:** Why should we **obey** and **submit** to our leaders? Because God has put them in a place of responsibility and accountability over us. Of course, this does not relieve individual responsibility, but it puts an *additional* accountability and responsibility to leaders.

c. **Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you:** Cooperative conduct is not only a joy to leaders, but it is profitable for the whole body. It is for *our own sake* that we should **obey** and **submit** to God-appointed leaders.

C. Concluding remarks.

1. (Heb\_13:18-19) A request for prayer.

Pray for us; for we are confident that we have a good conscience, in all things desiring to live honorably. But I especially urge *you* to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

a. **Pray for us:** The writer to the Hebrews considered it important that others pray for him. We all need and should welcome the prayers of others.

i. In the grammar of the ancient Greek language, **pray** is in the *present imperative* verb tense. It looks for continuous activity and implies that they had already been praying for him.

b. **That I may be restored to you the sooner:** There were obstacles preventing the writer from being reunited with his readers. He knew that prayer could remove those obstacles.

i. **I especially urge you to do this:** As far as the writer to the Hebrews is concerned, their prayers will determine *if* and *when* he is reunited with them. This shows how seriously he regarded their prayers for him.

2. (Heb\_13:20-21) A blessing is pronounced.

Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

a. This is a blessing in the style of the priestly blessing of Num\_6:22-27 : *The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the LORD lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.*

b. In this blessing, God is first recognized in His attributes: **peace**, power (**brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead**), loving care (**that great Shepherd**), and ever giving love (**the blood of the everlasting covenant**).

i. The idea of **the everlasting covenant** has been taken to express the **covenant** that existed before the foundation of the world between the Persons of the Godhead, working together for the salvation of man. Other

passages which may speak to this **everlasting covenant** are Rev\_13:8, Eph\_1:4, and 2Ti\_1:9.

ii. Some, however, simply take **the everlasting covenant** as another name for the New Covenant.

c. Then, the desire for blessing is expressed: **complete in every good work**, God's **working in you**, and all **through Jesus Christ**.

3. (Heb\_13:22-25) Conclusion to the letter to the Hebrews.

And I appeal to you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words. Know that *our* brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly. Greet all those who rule over you, and all the saints.

Those from Italy greet you. Grace *be* with you all. Amen.

a. **Bear with the word of exhortation, for I have written to you in few words**: The writer to the Hebrews reminds us of his purpose. His desire was to write a **word of exhortation**, that would encourage discouraged Christians, both then and now.

i. In Act\_13:15, the phrase **word of exhortation** is used to refer to a sermon. Perhaps the writer to the Hebrews means in Heb\_13:22 that he has given his readers a written sermon.

b. **Know that our brother Timothy has been set free, with whom I shall see you if he comes shortly**: These final words give us a few tantalizing hints of the writer's identity. But these words only tells us that the writer knew **Timothy**, and that he planned to visit his readers soon. It also tells us that his readers were based in Italy (**Those from Italy greet you**), probably in the city of Rome.

c. **Grace be with you all**: This is a fitting end for a book that documents the passing of the Old Covenant and the institution of the New Covenant. **Grace be with you all** indeed, under what God has given through the superior Savior, Jesus Christ! **Amen!**

(Heb 13:2) Do not neglect hospitality, because through it some have entertained angels without knowing it.<sup>1</sup>

(Heb 13:3) Remember those in prison as though you were in prison with them,<sup>2</sup> and those ill-treated as though you too felt their torment.<sup>3</sup>

(Heb 13:4) Marriage must be honored among all and the marriage bed kept undefiled, for God will judge sexually immoral people and adulterers.

(Heb 13:5) Your conduct must be free from the love of money and you must be content with what you have, for he has said, "***I will***

***never leave you and I will never abandon you.***"<sup>4</sup>

(Heb 13:6) So we can say with confidence, "***The Lord is my helper, and I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?***"<sup>6</sup>

(Heb 13:7) Remember your leaders, who spoke God's message to you; reflect on the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith.

(Heb 13:8) Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever!

(Heb 13:9) Do not be carried away by all sorts of strange teachings.<sup>7</sup> For it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not ritual meals,<sup>8</sup> which have never benefited those who participated in them.

(Heb 13:10) We have an altar that those who serve in the tabernacle have no right to eat from.

(Heb 13:11) For the bodies of those animals whose blood the high priest brings<sup>9</sup> into the sanctuary as an offering for sin are burned outside the camp.

(Heb 13:12) Therefore, to sanctify the people by his own blood, Jesus also suffered outside the camp.

(Heb 13:13) We must go out to him, then, outside the camp, bearing the abuse he experienced.<sup>10</sup>

(Heb 13:14) For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city that is to come.

(Heb 13:15) Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, acknowledging his name.

(Heb 13:16) And do not neglect to do good and to share what you have,<sup>11</sup> for God is pleased with such sacrifices.

(Heb 13:17) Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work.<sup>12</sup> Let them do this<sup>13</sup> with joy and not with complaints, for this would be no advantage for you.

(Heb 13:18) Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience and desire to conduct ourselves rightly in every respect.

(Heb 13:19) I especially ask you to pray<sup>14</sup> that I may be restored to you very soon.

(Heb 13:20) ***Benediction and Conclusion***

Now may the God of peace who by the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Jesus Christ,

(Heb 13:21) equip you with every good thing to do his will, working in us<sup>15</sup> what is pleasing before him through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever.<sup>16</sup> Amen.

(Heb 13:22) Now I urge you, brothers and sisters,<sup>17</sup> bear with my message of exhortation, for in fact I have written to you briefly.

(Heb 13:23) You should know that<sup>18</sup> our brother Timothy has been released. If he comes soon, he will be with me when I see you.<sup>19</sup>

(Heb 13:24) Greetings to all your leaders and all the saints. Those from Italy send you greetings.

(Heb 13:25) Grace be with you all.<sup>20</sup>